

## King receives condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah Tuesday received cables of condolences over the passing away of King Hussein from the president of Vietnam, the Council of Arab Ministers of Sports and Youth, and the president of the Algerian Peace Movement, Mahfouh Nehmeh. The Archbishop of Canterbury expressed deep sorrow over the passing of King Hussein and relayed the Evangelical Church's sadness over his death. In a press statement, the archbishop said the late King Hussein was one of the most prominent world leaders, adding that his love and concern for his country won him the respect of millions around the world. He voiced hope that the goals of achieving regional peace, security and stability would be achieved. HRH Crown Prince Hamzah yesterday received a cable from the commander of the Palestinian Liberation Army, Brigadier Faisal Fahoun, who congratulated the Prince on his designation as heir to the Throne.

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## King receives condolences from Omani official

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah Tuesday received at Raghda Palace Omar Zawawi, Sultan Qaboos' advisor for external relations, who extended his condolences over the passing of King Hussein. Zawawi conveyed to King Abdullah the greetings and best wishes of Sultan Qaboos. King Abdullah thanked Zawawi and asked him to convey his best wishes for continued good health and happiness to Sultan Qaboos.

## At least seven dead in Austrian avalanche

INNSBRUCK (AFP) — At least seven people died when a massive avalanche buried some 55 people in a ski resort in western Austria. Tuesday, rescue officials said. The victims were among 20 people so far pulled out of the snow in the village of Galtuer, while a further 25 were feared to be still buried, officials said. Three hours after the snow slide struck mid-afternoon, four houses were seriously damaged and five other buildings were hit near the centre of the village. The identity of those buried was not known, although the resort is used by both Austrian and foreign tourists.

## U.S. group reports sharp rise in Web hate sites

ATLANTA (R) — The KKK and other racist groups are increasingly spreading hate messages via the Internet and shifting their target audience from street thugs to college-bound teens. The Southern Poverty Law Centre said Tuesday. The Montgomery, Alabama-based centre, a human rights organisation that tracks hate groups and their activities, said hate sites on the Internet had grown by nearly 60 per cent from 165 in 1997 to 254 at the end of 1998. Nearly half of the more than 500 racist groups operating across the U.S. are using Internet sites to spread their messages, it said in a report. "It has become the propaganda venue of choice," law centre spokesman Mark Potok told Reuters. "It allows Klansmen who a few years ago could reach only 100 people with a poorly produced pamphlet to reach an audience in the millions."

## Pinochet's son seeks funds from Cuban exiles

MILAMI (AFP) — A son of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet travelled to the United States to raise money for his father's legal defence among anti-Castro Cuban exiles in south Florida, news reports indicate. Augusto Pinochet Hirian, 53, met recently with Miami businessman of Cuban descent and is organising a fundraiser event scheduled for March, the Miami Herald reported Monday. An outspoken defender of his father's hard-line policies, Pinochet Hirian has described executed opponents to the 1973-1990 military dictatorship as "inhuman beasts" to Spanish television reporters.

## Man immolates self after death of pigs

MOSCOW (R) — A man set himself ablaze after three piglets he had bought fell ill and died. Russia's RIA news agency reported on Tuesday. The agency said the 30-year-old man, from the southern Siberian region of Altai, was so distraught after the piglets' death that he drank a large amount of vodka, soaked himself in spirit and set himself on fire.

## King, Norwegian PM discuss Middle East peace process, economic ties

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Norway's Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik on Tuesday discussed with His Majesty King Abdullah and senior officials the deadlocked Middle East peace process and ways to boost bilateral economic ties.

Norway, which hosted the secret negotiations that led to the 1993 Oslo interim peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians, and Jordan, which has long exerted numerous efforts to revive the peace process, "have common goals," a senior Jordanian official said.

He said Bondevik, on a regional tour that has already taken him to the Palestinian self-rule areas and Israel, briefed Jordanian officials on his efforts to push Israel to implement last October's Wye River memorandum.

Israel last December refused to implement long-overdue redeployments from the West Bank and froze the land-for-security deal, which was clinched only thanks to the direct intervention of King Hussein.

The official said Bondevik also relayed his belief that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would refrain from declaring an independent state

on May 4, when the interim peace accords with Israel expire.

The Norwegian premier's meeting with King Abdullah came after talks with his Jordanian counterpart Fayed Tarawneh, the government's economic team, and other Cabinet members.

Earlier, Bondevik was received by Her Majesty Queen Noor (see story on page 3).

He was scheduled to leave early today to Cairo, the last destination of his regional tour.

Trade ties, the establishment of a free trade zone in the Kingdom, and Jordan's negotiations for partnership in the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) group topped the agenda of the talks between Bondevik and Tarawneh.

Discussions mainly covered joint industrial projects, and other aspects of bilateral cooperation, which ranges from trade to social and demographic studies.

In the phosphate industry, the Norwegian group Hydro Agri is active in Jordan with a \$600 million project expected to be completed by 2001.

Lars Dabbas, a chemical engineer at the Jordan Phosphates and Mining Company, told the Jordan Times yesterday



His Majesty King Abdullah meets Tuesday with Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik for discussions on the Middle East peace process (Petra photo)

that the Hydro Agri project includes the construction of a plant in Al Shadiyah, southern Jordan, for the production of 440,000 metric tonnes per year of phosphoric acids, used in the production of fertilisers.

A plant in the Red Sea port city of Aqaba will also allow for the production of 1.2 million tonnes per year of diammonium phosphate, also for fertiliser production.

A Norwegian embassy

source emphasised that the two plants are expected to create around 1,000 new jobs.

Together with Canada, and with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, Norway also sponsored a survey on living conditions analysing social, economic, and cultural trends in Jordanian society.

"Jordanian Society — Living Conditions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," published last October by the Oslo-based

Institute for Applied Social Sciences (FAFO) in cooperation with the Department of Statistics, represents the most comprehensive and updated survey so far on living conditions in the Kingdom.

Jordanian officials have stressed that the report provides a basis for policy-making to raise standards of living for the population as a whole, but especially for the weakest sectors.

## King holds talks with Iraqi foreign minister Sahhaf delivers message from Saddam Hussein

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday met with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf, who delivered a message from President Saddam Hussein, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Petra said that during the meeting, attended by Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh and Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, Sahhaf offered condolences to King Abdullah on the passing away of King Hussein.

The agency did not disclose the content of the letter from Saddam Hussein in its brief dispatch about the meeting, the first between the King and a senior Iraqi official since he took the oath as the Kingdom's fourth Hashemite Monarch.

Iraq sent one of President Saddam's two deputies, Taha Muhied-

din Ma'arouf, to attend the funeral of King Hussein.

Sahhaf, who arrived here from Beirut, was on a Middle East tour that included Syria, Sudan and several North African nations. His tour was organised to lobby for Arab support against U.S. threats against Baghdad.

Iraq has been under repeated fighter-bomber attacks from U.S. and British warplanes since Feb. 4.

The Iraqi minister, who is due to leave for Iraq today, is expected to hold a press conference at the Guest Palace before his departure. He is to respond to questions about recent news reports about unrest in Iraq following the killing of a senior Shiite Muslim cleric.

## Turkey to try Kurd rebel chief Ocalan for treason

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish judge on Tuesday charged Abdullah Ocalan with treason, setting in motion a trial that could result in the guerrilla chief being hanged for his rebels' armed campaign for self-rule.

Ocalan's first appearance before a judge came against a backdrop of sporadic violent protests inside Turkey and increasing European concern that his trial should be fair.

Such Western worries may not be helped by the fact that a group of lawyers defending Ocalan were unable to visit his client due to bureaucratic delay.

Anatolia news agency quoted lawyer and human rights activist Osman Baydemir as saying written authority for their visit had not reached officials at the port opposite the prison island where Ocalan is being held.

The sole aim is to speak to Abdullah Ocalan and remind him of his legal rights," Baydemir was quoted as saying.

Passers-by screamed abuse at the lawyers as they waited at the dockside. They later left the port without seeing their client, the agency said.

Turkey rebuffed an European Union (EU) call for international observers to be allowed at the trial, arguing such formal representatives would compromise the independence of Turkey's judiciary.

"The EU's idea of sending observers... is not acceptable," the foreign ministry said in a statement. It said individual monitors not formally recognised by the court could follow the case, if the trial judges agreed.

Ankara also turned down a visit from a senior member of the Council of Europe, which monitors human rights in Europe, to discuss Ocalan.

No date has yet been set for the trial, expected to be held on the Imrali prison island in the Sea of Marmara where Ocalan has been jailed since

he was captured in Kenya last week.

The charge of treason carries capital punishment and will probably be heard by a quasi-military court presided over by a panel of three judges, one of whom is an armed forces officer.

Turkey has not carried out the death penalty since 1984 and any execution must be passed by a new parliament, the formation of which will not be known until after elections in April.

Ocalan founded the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), fighting for self-rule in the southeast in a conflict that has cost more than 29,000 lives.

Turkish troops killed 14 of Ocalan's guerrillas in fighting in the southeast of the country over the last two days, authorities running emergency rule in the region said.

The clashes took place in the Siirt and Sivas provinces, both encompassed by the emergency rule authority that has barred foreign media from the mainly-Kurdish area it controls.

The authority is based in Diyarbakir where pro-Ocalan demonstrators shot and lightly wounded one policeman in a protest on Tuesday. Police arrested scores as they broke up the gathering, witnesses said.

Istanbul police arrested 57 people in connection with a number of petrol bomb attacks in the city thought to be connected to Ocalan's arrest, Anatolia said.

Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis accused Turkey of starting a "defamatory campaign against Greece" and said it would fail.

Interior ministers from 11 EU countries were to meet in Bonn on Tuesday to discuss the Ocalan capture and the wave of protests it set off across Europe last week.

The affair has cost the jobs of three Greek cabinet ministers. Ocalan has been jailed since

## Hizbullah guerrillas kill 3 Israeli officers

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The commander of Israel's elite paratroop commandos and two of his lieutenants were killed and five soldiers wounded early Tuesday in an ambush by Islamist guerrillas in south Lebanon, the army said.

It was the deadliest blow to the Israeli army in Lebanon in months and promptly sparked renewed calls from government hardliners for harsh retaliatory strikes deep into Lebanon.

Major Eitan Balashan, 34, commander of the Sayeret Tzahani Paratroop Commando Unit, was one of the most senior Israeli officers killed in the buffer zone Israel has occupied in south Lebanon since 1985.

The Tzahani unit was on an offensive operation hunting for positions of the Shite militia Hizbullah a kilometre north of the buffer zone when they

were leading an advance reconnaissance unit in the Hizbullah lookouts.

The second lieutenant was killed and another officer and four soldiers were wounded when they rushed forward to help their commander and were met by a hail of grenades and automatic weapons fire.

Four of the men were in moderate condition and one was slightly hurt, all suffering from shrapnel wounds.

It was the first time this year that Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon. In 1998, 24 Israeli troops were killed and 109 wounded.

The initial battle Tuesday lasted only 15 minutes but Hizbullah fighters further to

the rear pounded the area with mortar and rocket fire as Israeli Blackhawk helicopters evacuated the wounded.

Hizbullah issued a statement in Beirut saying its "heroes..." again proved that any enemy attempts to regain the military initiative were doomed to fail.

Israel responded to its losses by pounding suspected Hizbullah positions in the area with air strikes and more than 200 artillery shells, Lebanese sources said. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the attacks.

It was the deadliest battle for Israel in several months and the first test for Israel's new defence minister, Moshe Arens, a hawk who was appointed to the post in January and advocates an offensive policy in Lebanon.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, visiting the

wounded at Haifa's Rambam hospital, said the elite paratroop unit ran into "bad luck."

"This was a difficult day for the army because we cannot plan ahead in this kind of a war," he said.

Netanyahu reaffirmed that his government is willing to withdraw from the buffer zone as soon as Lebanon guarantees the security of Israel's northern border from attacks by Hizbullah or other movements.

Lebanon and its Syrian patron insist either on a unilateral Israeli withdrawal or a full regional peace which would also include an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights it occupied in 1967.

Netanyahu rejected this anew on Tuesday.

"The Syrians are putting forward demands that force Israel to give up all its strategic assets and this is impossible," he said.

"I hope the Syrians will change their position and enter fruitful negotiations without preconditions," he said.

"There is reason to believe that after the elections [in Israel in May] we will find a way to begin the political discussion with Syria that will affect the Lebanon border," he said.

His public security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, took a harsher line, urging tough reprisal attacks against Lebanon.

"Israel should cut the electricity to Beirut," he said, echoing past calls by several hard-line ministers in Netanyahu's right-wing government for a tougher policy in Lebanon.

But there were also renewed calls Tuesday for Israel to simply quit the buffer zone.

"The time has come for a unilateral withdrawal," said Labour Party deputy Yossi Beilin.

## Major powers announce partial Kosovo autonomy deal

RAMBOUILLET (R) — Putting a brave face on a partial peace deal, major powers said on Tuesday agreement had been reached on substantial autonomy for Kosovo at marathon talks between Serbs and majority ethnic Albanians.

But neither side signed the accord and it will take another conference starting on March 15 in France to discuss the crucial civilian and military implementation of self-rule.

The Kosovo Albanians accepted conditionally, subject to a two-week delay to consult their people and fighters in the hills. The Serbs said they accepted the principle of autonomy but demanded that an accord rule out independence for Kosovo or the status of a third republic within Yugoslavia.

The six-nation Contact Group, which steered 17 days of indirect negotiations at Ramboillet Chateau near Paris, called for an immediate ceasefire in Kosovo, where some 2,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past year.

"We expect the parties to honour fully and immediately the ceasefire which should be in place throughout Kosovo," the group said in a statement.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Tuesday's partial agreement had broken the stalemate in Kosovo. "This settlement is the best deal either side could hope to achieve," she said.

Albright said a NATO threat remained in force to bomb the Serbs unless they signed up to a full peace deal.

"There should be no doubt that NATO's Jan. 30 decision permitting Secretary General [Javier] Solana to authorise air strikes remains in force," she told a news conference.

But it was up to the Kosovo Albanians to "create this black and white situation" by fully accepting an accord themselves, Albright said.

Yugoslavia has consistently rejected the idea of NATO troops enforcing a peace deal in Kosovo. However, asked if the deal could be implemented by anything other than NATO troops, Albright said: "I can just tell you point blank from the perspective of the United States, absolutely not. It must be a NATO-led force. It can cooperate with other kinds of forces."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook acknowledged that complete agreement had proved impossible, but said

impressive progress had been made towards a "democratic, self-governing Kosovo with its own government, assembly and courts."

"Today is not the end of that process but only the end of phase one of that process," Cook said. "We have done a lot here, even if we've not yet done enough."

Both sides were expected to have signed the autonomy accord by the start of the March 15 implementation conference, he said.

(Continued

## United Nations says releases 92 Iraqi oil spares contracts

BAGHDAD (R) — The United Nations has released 92 contracts allowing Iraq to buy spare parts for its dilapidated oil industry, a U.N. statement issued in Baghdad said on Tuesday.

"Since the secretary-general's Dec. 29 1998 appeal... to review the status of contracts applications for the purchase by Iraq of oil industry spare parts and equipment, holds have been lifted on 92 contracts," the statement said.

"At the end of 1998 there were 144 contracts worth \$45 million on hold. An additional 34 contracts have been put on hold this year," the statement said.

Secretary General Kofi Annan last December asked

Committee 661, in charge of approving Iraq's trade with world firms, to review the status of contract applications for the purchase of oil spare parts.

Iraq is under stringent economic sanctions imposed for Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the rules of the U.N. pact, all food, oil, and other contracts must be passed to a special committee at the world body's headquarters for approval before shipments can be made.

The U.N. statement also said they received further three oil sector contracts worth \$463,963 bringing the total number received to 516 worth \$275,974,445.

Earlier this month, Iraq accused the United States and Britain of blocking 20 per cent of the import of oil spare parts.

"Since the first oil shipments under Phase V on Dec. 4, Iraq has exported 154,94 million barrels of oil for an average export rate of two million barrels per day," the U.N. statement said.

It added that the revenue raised was about \$1.317 billion.

Iraq is allowed to export \$5.26 billion of oil every six months under strict U.N. monitoring to help pay for humanitarian supplies. Low oil prices and damaged installations mean it is unable to reach that level.

Under phases four and five of the U.N.-monitored oil-for-food programme begun in December 1996, Iraq can import a total of \$600 million worth of oil industry equipment.

The U.N. statement said two contracts for the sale of Iraqi oil have been approved. One of them worth \$3 million and

involving a Greek company and the other involving a Malaysian firm worth \$1.8 million.

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## Iraqi missiles fired at U.S. planes causing damage — U.N. report

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Iraqi missiles fired at U.S. and British planes flying over the northern no-fly zone have caused some civilian damage and hampered U.N. operations, according to a U.N. report.

The United Nations is concerned that continued aerial confrontations could affect food deliveries in northern areas and has restricted staff movements between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. local time — the time when most incidents take place, it said.

The report by Hans von Sponeck, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Baghdad, provided a rare insight into the effects of the aerial confrontations in Iraq's northern and southern no-fly zones over the past two months. It was given to the U.N. Security Council on

Friday.

Russia's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Yury Fedotov said the zones were not authorised by the Security Council and expressed "deep concern" at the "ongoing, systematic information has been disclosed."

Von Sponeck said the report was based on information from U.N. personnel and from his own visit on Feb. 12 to the region around the city of Dohuk, which is 60 kilometres south of the Turkish border.

Between Feb. 2-12, the report said 33 missiles landed in a 250-square-kilometre area around Dohuk and at least 21 exploded. The missiles appeared to be surface-to-surface artillery rockets fired from mobile, multiple rocket launchers, it said.

U.N. personnel in the area were not in a position to confirm any casualties but said an unoccupied newly constructed three-storey house in the Hai Al Askari housing complex in Dohuk city was severely damaged on Feb. 12, the report said.

The remaining missiles fell in open areas, some close to residential buildings," the report said.

The missiles have created anxiety among the local population and stress among U.N. observers, although to date, no explosion has occurred in the immediate vicinity of a U.N. staff member, it said.

The U.N. World Food Program is concerned that the daily delivery of about 2,000 tons of food to Dohuk in 60-70 trucks could be affected by continued aerial incidents, the report said.

There is no intention on the part of the United States or Britain to target Iraqi civilians," said Deputy U.S. Ambassador Peter Burleigh, citing only one errant missile that killed 17 civilians near the southern port city of Basra. "That's why the

U.N. personnel in the area were not in a position to confirm any casualties but said an unoccupied newly constructed three-storey house in the Hai Al Askari housing complex in Dohuk city was severely damaged on Feb. 12, the report said.

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**Libya**  
undecided  
on suspect  
handover

# Home News



Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday receives Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik at Bab Al Salam Palace (Petra photo)

## Norway's PM praises Jordan's demining efforts, pledges continued support to United World College

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday received Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik at Bab Al Salam Palace.

Prime Minister Bondevik proposed arranging an international seminar at the Nobel Institute in Oslo in honour of and to commemorate His Majesty the late King Hussein and his work for peace.

The Queen and the prime minister also discussed Norwegian cooperation for demining in Jordan. Last year, Norway contributed \$1 million worth of demining equipment to Jordan.

The prime minister praised Queen Noor's efforts in the global campaign to ban landmines, said that Norway will provide Jordan with a new mine clearance machine. The Queen said that Norway has played a pivotal role in the mine-ban campaign and expressed the country's appreciation for easing the heavy burden of landmines that Jordan carries. He said

both she and the government are committed to promoting a wider regional commitment to the Ottawa Landmine Ban Treaty.

Prime Minister Bondevik told the Queen that Norway has covered the cost of ten students from developing countries to attend the United Nations University International Leadership Academy (UNUILA) and will continue to do so in coming years.

Queen Noor, president of the United World College (UWC), said the Norway College was a source of pride to her and to the President of the UWC International Council Nelson Mandela, adding that King Hussein was very encouraged by this programme and was hopeful that it would produce world leaders in different fields who will develop a network among themselves as well as a "shared sense of common destiny to which they can contribute."

The Queen expressed her hope that the prime minister would participate in the academy's future programmes. The Queen and the prime minister ended their visit by announcing that

Queen's visit to Norway in 1995 to inaugurate the Red Cross and Red Crescent United World College in Norway. The prime minister said that as minister of education during the 1980s he had been involved in the preparations for that college.

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Norway will offer \$1 million to Jordan for a project on water resources.

Queen Noor said Jordan was suffering from a drought until His Majesty King Hussein, when he first returned to Jordan from the Mayo Clinic, was blessed by "a downpour of affection from our people and of rain."

She added that Jordan's reservoirs have reached over 50% of their capacity and hopefully will be full by the end of the winter season.

The Queen said that the country welcomes Norway's "continued and sustained cooperation in this field, which is of vital priority for Jordan."

Attending the meeting with the Queen and Prime Minister Bondevik were Minister of Public Works and Transport Nasser Lawzi, Norwegian Ambassador Jan Jolle, Norwegian State Secretary Odd Saeter and Special Advisors Ambassador Terje Larsen and Ambassador Mona Funil.

Government departments working hours are currently from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Amoush did not say when the Cabinet will discuss the topic for approval but the daily Al Arab Al Yawm said

the Council of Ministers was expected to discuss the issue during its session yesterday.

Amoush indicated that there is a consensus among the Cabinet ministers to consider Thursday and Friday as the official weekend for public and private sector employees, but added that the decision has not been approved yet.

The minister told the Jordan Times that the substitute for the additional day will be to increase the current weekly working hours by one hour each day from Saturday to Wednesday.

Private sector representatives have indicated that if the government decision is

approved, it will decrease the productivity of government employees.

Fahd Fanek, an economic columnist, wrote Tuesday that the decision, if approved, will lead to reduced productivity.

"The Kingdom is a poor and non-industrial country, thus the talk about holidays should focus on shortening them," Fanek wrote in his article.

Fanek quoted a senior private sector firm as saying that official holidays consume 22 days every year, the annual holiday takes 26, while Fridays constitute 52 days of each year. He said emergency holidays take another 15 days and the reduction of working hours in Ramadan is equivalent to 10 days.

The total number of days allocated for "holidays" reaches 180 days a year, according to the writer.

"In other words a citizen is required to work half the time, and if he provides half of productivity, the country will be working with one-fourth of its capability," the writer said.

Secretary general of the Administration Development Ministry Nancy Baker refuted Fanek's statements, saying the proposed plan will not affect the productivity of the employees.

He said Friday cannot be considered as a holiday because it is a holy day for Muslims, who attend the mosque on Friday to perform weekly prayers.

## Vatican names five religious sites, creates pilgrimage programmes for Christians

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Vatican has named five Christian religious sites in Jordan for Christian pilgrims from around the world to attend, and has set dates from January and September each year for performing pilgrimage.

Charge d'Affaires at the Vatican Embassy in Jordan Monsignor Dominique Rezeau said the sites include Wadi Al Kharar (Christ's baptism site), Mount Nebo near Madaba, Makawer near Madaba, Khirbet Al Wahadneh and the Shrine of the Lady of the Mountain in Anjarah.

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near Ajloun (July 21, 2000); pilgrimage to the site where John the Baptist was beheaded at Makawer near Madaba (August 25, 2000); pilgrimage to Monte Nebo (Prophet Moses) near Madaba (Sept. 1, 2000).

Rezeau said the most important shrine is Christ's baptism site, located on the eastern side of the River Jordan.

Last October, Minister of Tourism Akel Biltaji said infrastructure works on the site had started and are expected to be completed by the year 2000.

According to Rezeau, programmes for pilgrims' visits to these sites have been prepared by Roman Catholic bishops. These are as follows: Pilgrimage to the River Jordan's Wadi Kharar to celebrate Christ's baptism (Jan. 7, 2000); pilgrimage to the shrine of the Lady of the Mountain at Anjarah near Ajloun (June 10, 2000); pilgrimage to Mar Elias shrine at Khirbet Al Wahadneh in Anjarah.

Ministry of Tourism officials said plans to develop the site were part of a drive to encourage religious tourism in Jordan, and Biltaji expects many travellers

close relationship between the three monotheistic religions.

Jordan hopes that at least two million visitors will visit its holy shrines in the year 2000 for religious and holiday purposes, according to Biltaji, who pointed out that Jordan's tourism potential would be significantly enhanced if the site where Jesus was baptised could be included in their itinerary.

Rezeau said celebrations for the advent of the third millennium will start in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve in 1999 and will last a whole year. The celebrations are to continue in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Kufri Nahoum and other sites west of the River Jordan, he added.

The

Vatican envoy said that His Holiness Pope John Paul II had expressed his desire to visit the Middle East by the end of 1999 or the beginning of the year 2000 in order to walk the route of the Prophet Abraham in manifestation of the

## Enough is enough: JEA to sue contractors who refuse to recruit Jordanian engineers

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The Jordan Engineering Association (JEA) said Tuesday it was planning to sue contracting firms who violate the association's law by failing to recruit members when carrying out projects worth over JD100,000.

The JEA received scores of complaints over the past several months that many contractors were carrying out major works across the Kingdom without hiring local JEA members in violation of article 25 of the association's 1972 bylaws.

Instead, they have hired engineers of other Arab nationalities living in Jordan on terms that are unacceptable to Jordanians; these include cheaper wages and no social security benefits.

"The JEA believes that contracting works are of a specialised nature and if the association allows them to implement contracts without employing engineers, then the quality of work may be compromised."

JEA chairman Hosni Abu Gheida told the Jordan Times.

He said the JEA was working hard to enforce existing laws to prevent "unscrupulous" contractors and real estate traders from building low-quality commercial apartments.

"A person who is not specialised in the field might commit technical errors without realising their gravity. An engineer takes an oath to be honest in his career and to carry out good work," he added.

Abu Gheida stressed that enforcing the laws will also help boost the contracting and engineering sector, facing tough foreign competition, and help absorb many of the country's unemployed engineers.

The JEA has avoided taking violators to court for several years because court cases take at least two years.

Now, it has opted to sue them. The JEA pays JD65 each month for each engineer hired in a contract worth over JD100,000 while the employer pays JD85.

"We wanted [firms] to be aware of the engineers' importance and to encourage them to employ hundreds of engineers," he said.

But lately, some firms have given the JEA a cold shoulder and "that's why we decided to take action," he said.

In a country whose economy has been hard-hit after the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis, one in every five Jordanians is living below the poverty line. Unemployment — officially estimated at 16 per cent and independently at as much as 27 per cent — is also another woe for the country.

The JEA has 41,500 registered members, making it the largest of the country's 13 professional unions. Nearly 30,000 of which are residing in Jordan.

JEA officials have estimated unemployment among engineers at 15 per cent.

## Queen, Prince Hashem receive condolences from local NGOs

'We are all one family in thanking God for King Hussein's life and one family in mourning for his loss'



Haya Arts Centre, the National Committee for Special Olympics and members of the Farah Hospital at the King Hussein Medical Centre.

Accompanying the Queen

was her son His Royal Highness Prince Hashem.

Later, Queen Noor and Prince Hashem met the multitude of mourners, who came to pray at the grave of His Majesty the late King

Hussein.

Queen Noor told them "we are all one family in thanking God for King Hussein's life and one family in mourning for his loss."

## Chechens mark eviction from Caucasus

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — Hundreds of Jordanians of Chechen origin Tuesday privately marked the 54th anniversary of their forced eviction from the Caucasus by Russian Stalinist leaders.

"The brutality of that period will always remain in our memory," said Chechen Ibrahim Batal, a retired Civil Aviation Authority official.

"We cannot forget how our people were driven out of their homeland and many of them were killed."

The history of Chechen and Circassian persecution spans centuries, and the migration of both peoples has been closely linked.

Because of its strategic location, the Caucasus region was repeatedly fought over as it provided vital trade and military routes through its mountains.

After the 1859 defeat of Chechen leader Sheikh Shamil by the Russian army, the whole north Caucasus came under the control of Czarist Russia.

After the defeat of Chechen leader Sheikh Shamil, the Chechen emigration began.

Later an anti-Islamic campaign in the North Caucasus was set in motion in 1924 and an overwhelming attack on Islam was launched in 1928.

Jordan's estimated 8,800 Chechens have been assimilated into society, serving in senior civil and military posts. Together with the Cir-

cassians, they are allocated three seats in the 80-seat Parliament.

"We are very grateful to the Hashemite family for accepting us in Jordan and for giving us our full rights as a minority. We wish all the minorities in the world would be granted their full rights and enjoy their freedom," Batal added.

Jordanian anthropologist Wasfi Mohammed Kilani has written a thesis on the Chechens entitled "The Chechens' Identity: Affiliations and Loyalties Between Two Cultures: The Original and the Receiving Ones," 1998.

It was used as a source for this article.

AMMAN (J.T.) — A 70-year old Yemeni national Ahmad Al Ashwal committed suicide by jumping from the fifth floor of a hotel in Amman.

A report in the local press Tuesday said the man, who was suffering from liver cancer, had entered Jordan 10 days ago along with some of his sons.

Ashwal's body was found at dawn Monday in front of the Jawharat Al Urdum hotel where he has been staying, according to the report.

It said the man's children reported that their late father suffered depression because

of his illness and that they had several times prevented him from committing suicide.

The report said the man jumped from his hotel room when his children were asleep early in the morning.

The body was taken to the National Centre for Forensic Medicine for an autopsy, which revealed that the man was suffering from a serious disease and that his death resulted from the fall which caused severe fractures to the head.

The Amman Police Department and the public prosecutor are investigating the case.

## Tarawneh and Sboul inspect Palace of Justice

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh and Minister of Justice Jawdat Sboul on Tuesday inspected the Palace of Justice as part of efforts to bolster cooperation between the executive and judicial authorities.

During the visit, Tarawneh met with President of the Judicial Council and Court of Cassation Taher Hikmat and discussed means to improve and develop the judicial performance and strengthen its independence.

system achieve its objectives.

In a meeting, attended by the Court of Cassation vice president and the presidents of General Prosecution, Court of Appeals, Court of First Instance and the Criminal Court, participants discussed means to improve and develop the judicial performance and strengthen its independence.

## Europe's weather claims more lives

SION, Switzerland (AFP) — Snowstorms continued to cause chaos across Europe Tuesday with at least five new avalanche deaths and thousands of tourists trapped in ski resorts and mountain villages.

As Swiss rescuers continued to search for eight victims buried since Sunday, Austrian authorities confirmed that two people died overnight after a snowslide ploughed into a mountain restaurant in the west of the country.

The severe weather also claimed lives further east in Romania, where two students died in an avalanche in the Carpathian mountains, while floods were reported in France, Germany and Hungary as snow melts swollen rivers.

In Italy, authorities said a 52-year-old woman was killed in an avalanche early Tuesday in the northwest Val d'Aoste.

In Switzerland, hopes were fading of finding survivors from avalanches which struck late Sunday in the southern Canton of Valais. Two people were found dead in their car Monday after nine chalets were swept away.

About 100 rescuers are involved in search efforts near the town of Evolene, using digging machinery to search through the shattered wooden huts and mountains of snow for eight missing people, including seven French nationals.

The search continued as a number of villages were cut off by the snow, including the resorts of Zermatt, Davos and Klosters, while officials were considering evacuating entire villages after power cuts were reported in one valley.

In western Austria, meanwhile, officials said one woman was found dead under the snow, while another man died from his injuries early Tuesday following a massive snowslide Monday in the Montafon Valley.

Six staff at the restaurant managed to extricate themselves after the avalanche, and two were found a few hours later.

Rescue operations, which continued for 10 hours, were hampered by the severe weather. The victims were a 31-

year-old woman of Hungarian origin and a 30-year-old Austrian. There had initially been hopes that they had sought refuge in the cellar of the restaurant, which was partly destroyed by the avalanche. The deaths came as maximum avalanche warnings continued in the Vorarlberg and Tirol regions, where some 10,000 tourists remain blocked by the heavy snowfalls.

Road and rail transport in western Austria was severely disrupted by the white-out, according to officials, while army helicopters were standing by to fly in vital supplies to blocked villages and to evacuate people if necessary.

In Italy, a woman was killed and three people injured early Tuesday in an avalanche at Morgex, 10 kilometres from the French border, which buried several homes after a slide of one kilometre. Rescuers with dogs continued to search the area for other casualties.

Road traffic was also disrupted in the region. Access to the nearby Mont Blanc tunnel linking France with Italy was closed to trucks following the avalanche.

Floods were reported in France, where roads were closed near the eastern towns of Sarre-Union, Haguenau, Thann, Strasbourg and Selestat, while floodwaters completely cut off villagers in one community near Montbeliard.

Over the border in Germany traffic was also disrupted as the Rhine threatened to break its banks, while further east in Hungary hundreds of families were evacuated after their homes collapsed due to snow melting after weeks of cold weather, while authorities in the east of the country are preparing for heavy flooding, officials said.

In Russia, meanwhile, two people froze to death in Moscow overnight, bringing the death toll there from freezing temperatures this winter to 105, the Interfax news agency reported.

In Finland, rescuers called off a search overnight amid reports that an avalanche in the ski resort of Yllaeas may not have claimed any victims.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin lays a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier in Moscow, celebrating the Day of the Defender of Fatherland, the former Soviet Army Day (Reuters photo)

## Yeltsin shows up in public to salute Russian army

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday made his first proper public appearance since an illness-plagued Central Asian trip last October, laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier by the Kremlin wall.

Yeltsin, 68, looked well and relaxed, his tall figure in a long black coat clearly visible among other senior officials who turned up at the tomb to mark the day of the Defenders of the Fatherland, formerly known as Red Army Day.

But he moved rather

stiffly behind the Kremlin cadets carrying the wreath, and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov tried to support him by the arm as the president mounted the steps to the tomb.

Standing bare-headed in the cold, Yeltsin smoothed out the Russian tricolour ribbons on the wreath and then, along with the military top brass including Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev, saluted the troops as they marched past the tomb.

Later Yeltsin chatted with the officers, smiling

and shaking hands with some of them, and left in his Mercedes limousine.

Also Tuesday Yeltsin awarded Marshal Sergeyev a personal standard, ITAR-TASS news agency said. The agency said awarding a standard to the defence minister had revived a Tsarist-era tradition.

Yeltsin's recent bout of activity is clearly aimed at reasserting his authority, undermined by health problems and Russia's deep economic crisis. Yeltsin has forced

day running of Russia over to Primakov.

He recently flew to Jordan to attend King Hussein's funeral but looked pale and unsteady and had only direct contact with other dignitaries before returning early to Moscow.

Yeltsin almost collapsed from a heavy cold on his previous big public appearance last October in Central Asia. He has kept out of public view since then, spending most of his time in hospitals, sanatoriums and country residences.

## Russia to freeze NATO programmes if air strikes target Serbia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia will scale back its cooperation ties with NATO if the Atlantic alliance carries out air strikes on Serbia, a top defence official said Tuesday.

"We have a lot of projects with NATO which are very interesting and several of these programmes will be frozen," said General Leonid Ivashov, who is in charge of international cooperation at the defence ministry.

"We do not want to cooperate with an organisation which violates international rules on relations between states and we will not cooperate with such an organisation," Ivashov said.

His comments came just hours before a deadline expires for Serb and Kosovar Albanian negotiators to conclude a peace deal at protracted talks in France. NATO has warned Belgrade that failure to agree terms will be punished with air strikes, but Moscow has steadfastly warned against such military intervention.

Russia and NATO took a large stride towards each other in 1994 with the signature of the bridge-building partnership for peace programme, which also includes dozens of other East European and former Soviet republics.

In May 1997, Moscow signed a charter with

NATO defining its relations with its erstwhile adversary.

But ties have been sorely tested by NATO's designs on Russia's one-time allies in Eastern Europe, and by the recent dispute over the Kosovo conflict.

NATO has been flexing its muscles and heaping pressure on Belgrade to agree to autonomy for its southern province and an international force to patrol a peace settlement to the year-long conflict.

Moscow has warned NATO and Washington to renounce any use of force to impose a settlement, and has said that peacekeepers could only be sent to Kosovo with the express permission of

Belgrade and the U.N. Security Council.

"Russia cannot accept military actions with authorisation from the U.N. Security Council and the agreement of the two parties, particularly Belgrade," Ivashov said.

He warned that NATO should expect to be met with determined Serbian resistance if it chose the force option.

"It is clear that the Yugoslav army and people of this country are prepared to fight for their independence," Ivashov said, adding that NATO warplanes could expect to come up against "pretty effective" Serbian air defence systems.

## Boy escapes three years of slavery in southern Philippines

COTABATO, Philippines (AFP) — An 11-year-old boy was reunited with his parents here Tuesday three years after he was abducted and sold as a child slave in the southern Philippines, his rescuer and his parents said.

Raymond Pacquit, a wiry and dark-skinned lad whose limbs bore scars were inflicted by torture and heavy farm labour, escaped from a Muslim couple near the southern city of Marawi last week and sought shelter in the home of a former Muslim guerrilla leader.

Ex-separatist rebel Sammy Sarip called up DXMS radio station here after the boy told him his parents were from Cotabato; the station arranged the reunion.

"I will love my child forever to atone the three years when he had none," said a sobbing Ellen Pacquit, a sidewalk vendor who is the boy's mother.

The boy, who received no schooling in his years in bondage, no longer spoke his parents'

Cebuano dialect and the radio station had to call in a Maranao translator so the child and the parents could understand each other.

The boy said he was eight and playing hooky when he woke up to find himself on the bed of a truck en route to Marawi, 90 kilometres to the north.

There the unidentified truck driver sold him for "a bunch of money" to a couple who made him work their farm. He said his masters beat him many times and did not pay him for his services.

Sarip said the radio station put him on air to provide a physical description to the stray child. The boy's father, Romeo Pacquit, a hotel bellboy, said he thought "that's my kid."

"It was Allah's will" that the boy found him, said Sarip, a former ranking leader of the Moro National Liberation Front, a separatist group which signed a peace treaty with the Manila government in 1996.

DHAKA (R) — Two people were killed and at least 100 injured in a spate of bombings and violent clashes in Bangladesh Tuesday as opposition parties enforced a nationwide strike to block municipal elections, police and witnesses said.

One man was killed by a home-made bomb that exploded on a street in the capital Dhaka, police said.

An army soldier died in the port city of Chittagong after being caught in an exchange of gunfire between strike supporters and opponents near his barracks, security officials said.

Of those injured across the country in clashes between political rivals, 25 were hurt by bombs, police and witnesses said.

Opposition and pro-government activists demonstrated on Dhaka's streets, chanting and throwing their fists in the air, and officials said they feared further violence.

More than 50 people were detained in Dhaka, including Shafiqul Alam Prodhon, head of the small opposition Jatiya Ganotantri Party.

In the southern city of Khulna, five people were hurt when a bomb went off during a street march by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), officials and police said.

An alliance of three major opposition parties, including the BNP, the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, called the strike to thwart the municipal vote and press for the resignation of

Chief Election Commissioner Abu Hena, whom they accuse of pro-government bias.

It is the second three-day opposition strike this month.

The opposition harbours deep animosity towards Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government and frequently calls such strikes over political issues.

Security was tight around polling stations and voters turned out in large numbers despite the strike, officials and witnesses said.

"The turnout has been heavy since voting started at 8 a.m. (0200 GMT)," said a poll official in Munshiganj, near Dhaka.

"Voters are standing in

voting," said Rafiqur Rahman, a journalist visiting Munshiganj, an opposition stronghold.

Voting was also peaceful in nearby Panchagarh district, officials said.

The election was taking place in 54 municipalities Tuesday, the first of three days of voting in 136 municipalities.

Extra police and paramilitary guards were deployed in Dhaka and other major cities. The army has been asked to protect law and order at polling stations.

The government said Monday police protection would be provided to shops and businesses that stay open.

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## Two killed, 100 hurt in Bangladesh strike

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Myanmar Home Affairs Minister Tin Hlaing (centre), Foreign Minister Win Aung (second right) and Interpol Director Paul Higdon (second left) preside over the opening ceremony of the Fourth Interpol International Heroin Conference in Yangon. Interpol opened its conference in the Burmese capital despite a boycott by Western countries such as the U.S. and some European states which say that Myanmar is not making enough efforts in fighting drug trafficking. At right and left are unidentified Myanmar officials (AFP photo)

## U.S., Europe blasted for boycotting • Myanmar heroin conference

**YANGON, Myanmar (AP)** — The United States and European countries were rebuked Tuesday for boycotting an international heroin conference because it was hosted by Myanmar, one of the world's biggest producers of the drug.

Participants at the 4th International Heroin Conference said the boycott by the world's biggest heroin consuming nations ran counter to the spirit of international cooperation against drug trafficking.

"As two of the largest markets for heroin in the world, the United States and Britain bear a special responsibility to work with the rest of the international community in every way possible," Home Affairs Minister Col. Tin Hlaing said in his opening address.

The four-day conference was organised by Interpol, the Lyon, France-based agency that bolsters links among national police forces.

Paul Higdon, director of the group's criminal intelligence directorate, noted that Interpol had been criticised for providing Myanmar "a platform from which it could speak out" about its anti-drug activities.

Higdon said the boycotting countries had the right to take such action, but

regretted "that a political situation which is viewed by many as a serious problem has held hostage the universally recognised problem of drug abuse."

"I feel there is more to gain through dialogue than boycott," Higdon said.

Washington and other critics say Myanmar's military regime has failed to seriously crack down on drugs and has such a poor human-rights record that it does not deserve the legitimacy conferred by the conference.

The New York-based human rights watch likened holding the meeting in Yangon to "holding a convention on weapons of mass destruction in Baghdad, on women's rights in Kabul or on terrorism in Tripoli."

Other countries boycotting the conference include France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Representatives of 26 countries, including Australia and Switzerland, were listed as attending.

Tin Hlaing urged the boycotting countries "to put politics aside for the sake of the millions of people around the world whose lives are threatened by the drug trade."

His speech repeated almost word-for-word recent commentaries in the state-controlled press.

Myanmar officials are especially sensitive to criticism on the drug issue because they feel they have made great achievements in the fight against drugs — especially measured by the number of seizures — with almost no outside aid.

Most foreign aid to the country, also known as Burma, was cut off a decade ago following the bloody suppression of protests against rule by the military, which has run the country since 1962.

Participants at the meeting were to discuss heroin production and trafficking, trafficking routes, criminal groups, payment systems and illicit supplies.

Washington has long taken a hard-line position against the Myanmar government and says some corrupt elements in the military may be aiding the heroin traffickers.

The ruling state peace and development council encourages traffickers to invest their profits in development projects, rather than throwing them in jail, U.S. officials say.

Britain and the United States regard Myanmar as the world's single biggest producer of heroin.

In Bangkok, Thailand, narcotics experts presenting the annual report of the international narcotics con-

## AIDS — The big health crisis facing Nigeria's new rulers

**LAGOS (AFP)** — Packed into a sprawling Evangelical Church, in a run-down district of Lagos on a sweltering Sunday this month, around 2,000 people watched as pastor Temitope Joshua, a self-proclaimed prophet and healer, went through his weekly ritual.

This particular day the crowd was a good one. Twelve people living with AIDS shuffled forward to receive a longed-for blessing.

They were admonished for the sin of fornication which, they are told, brought on their present condition, and asked to cast out the evil spirit. Pastor Joshua then "blessed" them and they were "healed."

"Hallelujah!"

Immediately, smartly-dressed church workers came round with collection boxes and everyone present was urged to put something in.

At 20 naira or 50 naira (25 to 60 cents) a throw, and with a congregation of 2,000, the Sunday service was indeed a profitable business.

The desperation of this scene is repeated weekly in different ways in thousands of unofficial churches and "healing centres" across Nigeria, Africa's most populous country.

It is, health workers say,

result of a "grossly inadequate" response by authorities here to the AIDS epidemic sweeping Africa.

For many years Nigerians dismissed the acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome as a "white man's invention" meant to keep down the world's black population, or a "gay disease" that would not touch Nigeria's heterosexual communities.

That has changed.

Eighteen months ago, Nigerian afro-beat legend Fela Anikulapo-Kuti died of AIDS and his brother, the former health minister professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, told the world the cause of his death, alerting many Nigerians for the first time to the real dangers of the disease.

But already, Ransome-Kuti says, it is too late for many.

On government figures, at least five per cent of Nigeria's 108 million people are carrying the HIV virus today. But health workers think the real figure is double that — a new survey is due soon — and project that within a generation, the figure could reach 30 to 35 per cent.

With the population set to double in that time, the number of those carrying the virus would reach as many as 75

million by 2020.

"The world is holding its breath in horror and anticipation of the disaster that will befall us if we do not take effective steps to stop the spread of AIDS in our country," Ransome-Kuti told a recent gathering in Lagos.

"It might even be too late to avert the impending disaster. Maybe we can only ameliorate it," he said.

However, so far, it appears unlikely that the looming AIDS catastrophe will be a top priority of the new government set to take charge after the Feb. 27 presidential election.

Oli Falae, one of the two candidates in the poll, thinks much of the talk is hype.

"As president, I am not going to panic. I think there is a need to raise the level of consciousness in Nigeria about the AIDS threat ... But I think some people go overboard about it," he told AFP this month.

Falae's opponent, former military ruler Olusegun Obasanjo, a committed Christian, does not mention it in his campaign manifesto at all.

Hence the desperation of those attending Sunday services across the country, seeking a cure, knowing they probably will not get one, but thinking they are likely to receive more help there than from the government.

## Indonesian soldiers fire warning shots, at least 2 killed

**JAKARTA, (AP)** — Homemade bombs exploded, soldiers fired warning shots and Muslims fought Christians with clubs and knives Tuesday in a riot-torn Indonesian town. At least two people were killed and 11 were injured.

In Jakarta, a senior military officer warned that chronic civil unrest across Indonesia was severely straining the armed forces.

Deadly turmoil has persisted in the world's fourth most populous nation since riots and protests helped oust former president Suharto in May after 32 years of authoritarian rule.

The unrest has been linked to economic hardship, gang rivalries, disputes over political reforms and ethnic and religious tensions.

Separatist movements are active in several areas, including the former Portuguese colony of East

Timor. And common crime is rising in the southeast Asian country of 210 million people.

In the latest violence, several bombs exploded early Tuesday in houses in Ambarawa, the centre of religious fighting that has killed at least 129 people this year. In recent weeks, gangs have assembled crude bombs to use in brawls.

Panicked neighbours blocked roads in two neighbourhoods, gang fights broke out and security forces fired in the air to disperse the mobs. Thick smoke billowed from at least 20 burning buildings.

Two people were killed, said Lt. Col. Aris Martanto, the regional military chief. Citing witnesses, the official Antara news agency reported that five people died.

At least one of the victims died of bullet wounds at a

hospital, a paramedic said by telephone. She declined to be named.

A chief adviser to military commander Gen. Wiranto said the 500,000-member armed forces, which includes the police, needed more cooperation from civilians to restore order. Wiranto, like many Indonesians, uses only one name.

"It's not completely in the hands of the military. If every incident is left to (the military) to solve, it will be very difficult," Maj. Gen. Agus Wirahadikusumah said at a business forum.

"If we look at the morale of the nation, we are very afraid," he said.

In past months, many rioters have concentrated their anger on the military, which has been tainted by human rights abuses and its links to the old regime.

However, the armed forces remains the most

unified institution in turbulent Indonesia and has vowed to safeguard parliamentary elections on June 7. The vote is expected to be the fairest in more than four decades.

Military commanders will retain a political role after the vote, having agreed to cut their quota of appointed seats in half to 38.

Ambarawa is the capital of Maluku province, site of the worst rioting since the downfall of Suharto. The area is 2,250 kilometres east of Jakarta and was known as the spice islands in Dutch colonial times.

Indonesia is overwhelmingly Muslim, but the unrest hit areas with large Christian populations.

In a riot Monday on Borneo island, four people were killed and 20 houses were burned in fighting between rival gangs in the town of Sambas, local government officials said.

## China blasts Taiwanese ministerial visit to the Vatican

**BEIJING (AFP)** — China Tuesday sharply denounced a visit to the Vatican by Taiwanese Foreign Minister Jason Hu, warning it would only sour relations between Beijing and the Holy See.

"The visit of the so-called Foreign Affairs Minister of Taiwan Hu Zhijiang (Jason Hu) to the Vatican can only have a negative impact on the improvement of relations between China and the Vatican," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

The Taiwan question "is one obstacle to an improvement of relations between China and the Vatican," he added, saying the Holy See would be obliged to sever

relations with Taipei before establishing ties with Beijing.

The Taiwanese foreign minister paid a visit to the Vatican late last week, only days after a statement from Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state, indicated the papal state would shift formal recognition from Taipei to Beijing "not tomorrow but as soon as the Chinese authorities would allow it."

Sodano, the second in command to Pope John Paul II, added he did not wish to "disturb" relations with Taiwan, but rather aimed to have the nunciature, the Vatican's de facto

embassy, return to Beijing where it was in the beginning.

The statement has provoked deep anxiety in Taipei, which — in addition to its relations with the Vatican — now maintains formal diplomatic ties with only one other European country, Macedonia.

Upon his return to Taipei, Hu told journalists that he did not expect a change in the Vatican's attitude in the near future, despite the damaging comments.

Beijing and Taipei have laid rival claims to represent all China since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, when Chiang Kai-Shek's defeated nationalist forces fled the mainland.

## Indian PM threatens to quit over state sacking fiasco

**NEW DELHI (AFP)** — Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee threatened Tuesday to quit unless coalition allies backed a resolution endorsing the sacking of a state government, alliance sources said.

Presiding over an emergency cabinet meeting, Vajpayee let it be known among his allies that he would step down if they let him down over the Bihar state issue.

"We were informed the prime minister was serious about resigning if he was embarrassed in (the lower house)," a leader of the pro-government Telugu Desam Party said.

"We are taking the threat seriously," a party source told AFP.

Vajpayee's cabinet number two, Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, said: "We are discussing all possibilities," when asked about the meeting.

Later, however, the prime minister's Hindu nationalist BJP party, which heads the ruling

coalition, denied he had threatened to quit.

"Such rumours ... are politically motivated," a party official said.

The cabinet meeting was held before parliament convened to debate the imposition on Feb. 12 of direct federal rule in Bihar, under a controversial law allowing for the dismissal of a provincial government for alleged misrule.

Opposition members disrupted business in the lower and upper houses over the issue, forcing adjournments for the day.

There was some good news for Vajpayee when a Sikh party in the coalition, some of whose leaders had said they would oppose the sacking of the Bihar government, declared it would back the prime minister.

Parkash Singh Badal, president of the party, said a directive had been issued to his eight MPs to vote in favour of the bill.

"We want the coalition gov-

ernment at the centre to complete its five-year term," the Press Trust of India quoted him as saying.

Vajpayee's resignation threat followed a sudden about-turn by the main opposition Congress Party, which decided Monday to oppose the resolution.

Previously, the Congress had appeared to support the government line, saying the law and order breakdown in the populous eastern state left no alternative to dismissal.

The BJP-led coalition has a very slim majority in the lower house and is vastly outnumbered in the upper house, where the Bihar resolution has no hope of being passed without Congress support.

It is the second time the federal government has sought to oust the Bihar government, after an initial recommendation in September was turned down by the president.

Political analyst Mahesh Rangarajan told AFP a second failure would be unprecedented.

## Chinese dissident journalist barred from meeting with foreign press

**BEIJING (AFP)** — Chinese dissident journalist Gao Yu, released on medical parole last week after spending five-and-a-half years in prison, was granted her freedom on condition she refrain from writing and not speak with foreign journalists, family members said Tuesday.

Gao Yu is forbidden to speak with the media, at least until her original prison sentence finishes next October, Gao's son, Zhao Meng, told AFP.

"She is still ill, but in good spirits," Zhao reported by phone, adding she had not yet been admitted to hospital due to the annual service slowdown over the two-week new

year holiday.

Gao, 55, has been ordered not to leave her Beijing neighbourhood without authorisation from local authorities. In order to leave the city, she must first request permission from the police and may not be absent for more than three days. She must also undergo a medical examination every three months, family members said.

According to her son, Gao has been offered exile in the United States prior to her release, in a proposition similar to that accepted by other well-known Chinese dissidents including Liu Nianchun, Wang Dan and Wei Jingsheng.

But, following Gao's repeated refusals to leave the country, authorities agreed to free her on condition she abstain from all political activity.

Gao's arrest was denounced by human rights organisations and journalists around the world. Following her release, the journalism school at New York's Columbia University renewed a study grant offer which had been extended to Gao prior to her arrest.

According to Zhao, Gao has not yet decided if she will accept the offer, which would mean a further prolonged separation from her family.

## Jordan Times

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## Accepting the new era

THE MEETINGS of Jordan's economic team in Riyadh hold significant promise. Perhaps, however, not in the traditional sense, that is, the expectation of straight out monetary aid. What is before us is without doubt a new era — the age of direct aid is over. While it would be most fortunate to receive an influx of aid to help boost our depressed economy, it is time to look at programmes that would have long-term value in the institutional sense.

The global outpouring of tributes to His Majesty King Hussein and the recognition of the legacy of his goals and aspirations for the Kingdom translate into support for Jordan. The support we should be looking for, however, should not be aimed at what is economically profitable but rather socially important. Finance Minister Michel Marto said as much when he stated that the Jordanian delegation's mission to Riyadh was "to discuss means to develop an institutional framework for long-term trade and economic ties." Thus, the new era of support should involve the funding through soft loans of major projects such as the rehabilitation of the Kingdom's water sector, an essential requirement that would greatly benefit the country. It should also mean that Jordanian products gain access to old markets and new. Unemployment could be eased significantly if our Gulf neighbours would again avail themselves of our professionals, technicians and semi-skilled workers.

That a Saudi delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development is due in Amman soon to study funding of infrastructure projects is encouraging. Again, one must be realistic and aware that the world economy today precludes the facile write-off of Jordan's debts. Therefore, in the case of the Kingdom's debt to Saudi Arabia, we should be looking at innovative debt rescheduling arrangements.

The support is there, as we can discern from comments made by members of the economic team on their return to Amman Monday night. The important issue is to recognise that the support will not come free and will require creativity, determination and good-old honest hard work to make it beneficial and set Jordan on the self-reliant path the late King Hussein fore-saw for the Kingdom.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'a's Fahed Fanek said that although the government has agreed, in principle, on a two-day holiday, the issue is still open for debate, because no decision has been taken yet. Fanek quoted a company employee as saying that including the 52 days lost to a Thursday or Saturday extension of the weekend, the total number of days off will be 180 days. In other words, said Fanek, a citizen is required to work half the time, and if he/she provides half the level of productivity, the country will be working at one-fourth maximum capability. Why do people complain about incompetence, the weakness in economic growth, poverty and inadequate production, Fanek asked. First world countries have the right to take two-day holiday a week because their productivity for the rest of the working days provide more than enough to ensure a living standard 15 times greater than Jordan's, he said. The Kingdom is a poor, non-industrial country, thus talk about holidays should focus on shortening them as they will cause more incompetence, Fanek said.

Al Dustour's editorial said the Jordanian economic delegation's visit to Saudi Arabia and its warm reception reflects the depth of the two countries' relations. There is no doubt that the firm basis of their historical ties have been established on joint understanding, sincere brotherhood and strong bilateral concern, added the editorial. Therefore, Saudi Arabia stood outstandingly and compassionately by the Kingdom after His Majesty King Hussein's passing away, said the newspaper. On that basis, the delegation went to the country relying on such strong bilateral relations, which have been built by King Hussein and King Fahd with optimism that the ties will continue to develop. No doubt, the visit focused on ways to find Saudi support for the Jordanian economy, removing obstacles facing it by strengthening trade exchange, how to open the labour market to Jordanians and on support for the Kingdom's reserve of hard currencies. The paper said it is confident that the Saudi "brothers" will not spare any efforts to aid Jordan.

## Washington Watch

# Arab states gain in U.S. public opinion

Dr. James J. Zogby

A NEW poll conducted for the Arab American Institute (AAI) shows that Americans are viewing several Arab states with increased favourability.

The poll, which was conducted by Zogby International of New York, also finds that only a minority of American voters considers U.S. Middle East policy to be "right and balanced." These results confirm a number of trends that have been developing during this decade. Americans are now somewhat more familiar with the Middle East. They are better able to differentiate amongst the Arab states, and are developing some positive attitudes toward many of them.

All of this has contributed to eroding Israel's hegemony over thinking about the Middle East. It has further resulted in moving U.S. public opinion in the direction of supporting a more balanced U.S.-Middle East policy.

The AAI/Zogby poll asked 756 randomly-selected likely U.S. voters to rate their attitudes toward a list of states. The results (see box) are ranked in order of the difference between the favourable and unfavourable rating given to each state. For comparison, the results of a 1995 poll that asked the same question appear alongside the 1999 results.

What is striking about these results, is that the Arab states included in this survey (all considered to be friendly to the United States) each show an improvement in their overall rating. The most dramatic improvement was registered by Jordan and is most

probably due to the extremely sympathetic press coverage given to the late King Hussein from the time of his dramatic intervention in the Wye Plantation peace talks to his funeral earlier this month.

It appears that the jump in Jordan's ranking was due more to positive press treatment of the King and the country of Jordan than to the simple fact that Jordan had concluded an agreement with Israel. Evidence for this can be found by noting that as late as April 1997, long after Jordan had signed a peace treaty, King Hussein's ratings in an AAI/Zogby poll were only 34 per cent favourable and 31 per cent unfavourable.

Jordan's 1995 country ratings, also taken in a post-peace context, were also negative.

In our more recent polling (AAI/Zogby January 1999), we found that the King's ratings (before his eventful return to Jordan) had climbed to 55 per cent favourable compared to 12 per cent unfavourable — the best of any Middle East leader, and as we see in the current poll, Jordan's ratings are also the highest in the Middle East.

While Jordan's significant positive press coverage can account for its favourability, the fact that Egypt was able to both maintain favourable ratings and bring down its unfavourable ratings while being subjected to repeated attacks in the U.S. press, is quite significant. Equally impressive are the substantial gains registered by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait — which, for the first time since we

began polling in 1992, now show strong net positive ratings. In contrast, during the same period the ratings of a number of non-Middle East countries friendly to the United States (Mexico, Japan and Russia) dropped slightly. This growing improvement in U.S. attitudes towards Arabs has had an impact on overall attitudes toward foreign policy. When asked if they felt that U.S. policy was too biased toward Israel, 38.5 per cent of the voters surveyed in the AAI/Zogby poll agreed. Only 20.5 per cent agreed that U.S. policy was too biased toward the Arabs. On the other hand, when asked if they felt that "U.S. policy in the Middle East was right and balanced" 55 per cent said it was not. Only 28 per cent agreed that it was — two to one margin.

These results corresponded with other findings in recent AAI/Zogby polls. In an April 1998 poll, for example, we found that twice as many U.S. voters felt that U.S. policy leaned toward

Country 1999: Favourable Unfavourable Difference

Favourable Unfavourable

Israel as those who felt that it should "lean toward Israel." In that same poll two-thirds of those surveyed felt that U.S. policy should "steer a middle course between Israel and the Palestinians." In another question the same two-thirds felt that the United States "should apply pressure equally to Israel and the Palestinians." It is important to note that all of this shift in attitudes is occurring while Israel retains a strong positive rating among U.S. voters. Voters appear to be able to distinguish between their displeasure with a country's policy and U.S. policy toward that country and their overall attitude toward the country itself.

This same sense of discernment and commitment to balance can be found in the nearly identical responses given in 1995 and 1997 AAI/Zogby polls when voters were asked whether they supported a "U.S. role in maintaining and defending the security of Middle East allies." The countries listed

22 34  
49 22  
50 27  
—  
—  
45 17  
44 27  
35 39  
32 39  
39 29  
31 39

(This AAI/Zogby International poll was conducted from February 14 to February 16, 1999. The attitudes of 756 randomly selected likely U.S. voters were sampled. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3.6 percent.)

## Will Israel heed ban on settlement activities?

By Pascal B. Karmy

ON FEBRUARY 10, 1999 the General Assembly of the United Nations overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for an international conference in Geneva on July 15 to enforce a ban on settlement activities in Israeli occupied territories.

Several resolutions were passed by the U.N. General Assembly and by the Security Council condemning settlements building by Israel and the confiscation of Arab lands for that purpose; but Israel has turned a deaf ear to those resolutions. It may be recalled that Switzerland which is not a member of the U.N., is the depository of the conventions of 1949 and subsequent protocols. Switzerland must, therefore, make arrangements for the event if the signatories separately affirm that they want the conference. Their affirmation has been expressed in the above-mentioned resolution.

After the occupation of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Israel undertook a massive colonisation in and around Jerusalem and in the West Bank and Gaza by confiscating Arab lands and building settle-

ments on them.

Such action goes against provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the previous international regulations of the Hague of 1907 which prohibit settlements building in occupied territories.

The Hague Regulations of 1907 provide that: "Requisition in kind and services shall not be demanded from local authorities or inhabitants except for the need of the army of occupation." Even the Israeli High Court of Justice held in 1979 as follows: "The decision to establish a permanent settlement destined from the outset to remain in its place indefinitely comes up against insurmountable legal obstacles, because no military government can create facts in its area for its military needs which are designated ab initio to persist even after the end of military rule in that area, when the fate of the area after the termination of military rule is still unknown." (High Court of Justice, Case 390/1979 Jerusalem). Furthermore the Hague Conventions of 1907 pro-

appropriation of property which is not justified by a military necessity" and "the illegal transfers of persons."

In accordance with those mentioned provisions, the United Nations has deplored and condemned the establishment by Israel of settlements in the occupied territories including Jerusalem, and has declared that Israel's actions in this regard have no legal validity.

One wonders what can ensue from the projected Geneva Conference due to be held on July 15 to ensure that the Fourth Geneva Convention is respected and in particular the convention's ban on settlements. Israel has flouted international laws and conventions including the United Nations'; will it heed the decision of the projected conference of July 15, since it has already rejected the relevant resolution.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and, for many years, legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna.

## Letters to the editor

### Intractable problems of nation-building

The article ("Ocalan trial stands to highlight issue of minority rights," JT, Feb. 18) points to two deep paradoxes of modern nation-building. Certainly, the proceedings now begin in Turkey do present a test, as the writer argues, but not just of Turkey, of the nation-building process itself.

First, at what point in the revolutionary process does terrorism become legitimate rebellion? All revolutions begin by lighting a match. The Boston Tea Party, tame by today's standards, is a most celebrated act of terrorism and has become a symbol for rebels everywhere — there are many more. But at what point, what magical moment, did it achieve legitimacy from the American colonists, much less the international community? The moment of legitimacy cannot be identified except after it has come and gone. It is easy to look back and say that the American Revolution was justified, but it was not easy to judge it as such during the heat of battle. We are all revisionists when it comes to revolution.

But international law cannot be revisionist. Consequently, international agreements that sanction rebellion when it is done "legally, by democratic means" paint a convoluted picture of the need to rebel. What minority in a legal, democratic regime would seek to rebel through terrorism?

The minorities that are burdened by the need to rebel violently are those who are not treated democratically and who do not have access to democratic institutions that would offer them a peaceful alternative. Hence, their cause has a double urgency: not only is their ethnic identity under siege, but their very lives are threatened. It is especially important for the international community to be proactive here, not to legitimise all acts of terror, but to judge the worthiness of each case's grievances. Here, the U.N. is wildly regressive — it intervenes only when circumstances have gotten so out of hand that the world's conscience is horrified. By then, both sides in the confrontation are so soiled by violence that neither seems to be a legitimate victor. Inaction, then, becomes a sound policy choice for the U.N. Consider Bosnia, until recently Israel, and now Turkey as examples where the U.N. prevents itself from acting because it simply cannot make up its mind which side is the "bad guy" — or is simply afraid to say so. In the meantime, the confrontation devolves to belligerency.

Second, the writer argues that in a multi-ethnic state such as Turkey, the Kurds should be permitted full expression of

their minority ethnicity — language, I presume, schools and holidays as well. As the example of Quebec illustrates, this status is not a comfortable one. Quebec craves secession, the only means by which the special identity of its inhabitants will be secured. While I begrudge no one who wants to preserve their heritage, the only place on the globe where complete ethnic assimilation has occurred is in the U.S. There, all third generation immigrants have lost almost entirely their ethnic identity. What the Canadian and U.S. juxtaposition demonstrates is that we can't have both robust ethnic identities and peaceful coexistence ("warm" peace) with our citizen neighbours. History seems to tell us that it must be one or the other — never both. I don't personally like this conclusion, but I cannot escape it either.

These two paradoxes leave us with the sense that we are locked in an unavoidable struggle when we nation-build. On the one hand, we must either assimilate and create a new identity that supersedes all others or prop up one ethnic group which can dominate the others irreversibly. On the other hand, where a minority group chooses not to be dominated and steps out on its own, the nation is imperilled, the international community reveals its utter helplessness, and the ethnic group has no choice but to embrace violence and seek its own state to build — perhaps for the first time justifying in the minds of majority-group citizens the genocidal urges that sparked rebellion in the first place.

Jenifer Cartland Chicago U.S.

### Action needed!

FOR MORE than two weeks now, the traffic lights near my house in Marj El Hamam have been out of order. The lights are situated in an area where heavy traffic flows day and night (Marj Al Hamam-Na'ir Road). I have been in touch with the authorities on several occasions regarding this matter and, to date, nothing has been done. It is important to note that since these lights have been out of order, many car accidents have taken place. Does it take the loss of a human life for them to take action?

Usama N. Aghabi  
P.O. Box 950365  
Amman 11195  
Jordan

### Forever in our memory

THANK YOU God for giving us all what we have... and thank you for giving us a memory!! A memory is like a mental reservoir, all throughout one's life, one's mind collects and captures many precious treasures. Thus, the reservoir expands. Ours is full, of precious gifts from our beloved King Hussein.

God gave us as well, the gift of referring to our mental bank in time of need to withdraw hope, faith and courage. Therefore, the miracle of a memory gives continuity a chance.

The personality of our beloved King Hussein is engraved in the memory of all Jordanians!! He will be the kind face to remember when we are troubled, and the gentle hand to wipe a tear off a child's cheek, and his smile will be the sunshine on a cloudy day.

He was a great loving man. One of a kind. He gave us gifts from his heart: love, kindness, joy, understanding, warmth, sympathy, tolerance and forgiveness. He gave us gifts from his mind: ideas, dreams, principles, plans and projects. He gave us gifts of his spirit: vision, aspiration, peace and faith. He gave us true gifts; as he gave us a portion of himself!

He was himself a friend. Thus making friends came automatically. He was sensitively responsive to others' dreams and aims, showed appreciation for others' contributions. He enjoyed a tolerant and understanding heart. Tolerant he was! Not out of weakness, but strength.

A memory is a record that is a gift of God. A memory is our link with the past. And our inspiration for the future. In our reservoir as Jordanians, we will find a treasure that is left for us by our caring King, to help us even when he's far away.

He was an encouraging father. To attaining qualities of spirit and attitudes of mind that would help us enjoy a better radiant living. He was the spark that ignites action. Great decisions come first of which great work followed. That was our beloved Hussein.

A man who was working hard even when he was ill and needs rest planting trees.

As he always wished to die as a hero that's just what he did! He ensured that Jordan will always stay young while continuing to grow. For a country becomes old whenever it stops growing!! Our beloved Hussein wanted Jordan to grow, as much as our love to Jordan grows everyday!

Let us be open channels for the goodness of God. And attune our lives to faith, hope, kindness, dedication and hard work. We can and should let Jordan remain the window through which the light of goodness shines, he will be watching... as he always did.

Zein Al Hayek  
Arman

Feature  
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By Stephen C.

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# The 'bicycle guerrillas' of Belgian eco-war

By Stephen Castle

PETER TERRYN has been arrested at least 20 times over the years, but the latest episode was bad even by his standards.

He suffered a week of solitary confinement, but the 35-year-old political activist had one argument which helped to clear him of the charges of fire-bombing Belgian burger bars and destroying a McDonald's: Terryn is a meat eater. After a lengthy interrogation he was released to return to Weik, the organisation he runs in Antwerp. Also freed, for the time being anyway, were two teenage girls, Lyndsey Van Keer and Anja Hermans, although Van Keer has confessed that she was responsible for the largest and most serious arson, in August last year.

The bizarre case has thrown up more questions than it answers. Is Belgium in the grip of an orchestrated campaign of eco-terrorism? Or has its judicial system simply been led a merry dance by two 19-

year-old girls and a group of campaigners, whose other activities include the theft of garden gnomes?

Within a few months last year the burger bar attacks in Belgium grew from a minor irritant to a full-scale alarm, involving an array of police forces and the security services. The attacks for which the Belgium Animal Liberation Front claimed responsibility reached double figures, culminating in the burning of a McDonald's branch at Puurs, near Antwerp. Early theories linked the actions, via Internet links, to Britain, the ALF's birthplace.

But the targets and the nature of the campaign marked it out as a distinctively Belgian affair. In the most macabre incident, human remains were found outside a McDonald's in the Ixelles district of Brussels.

The reaction of the authorities was to pull in all the likely suspects. They were Terryn and the girls. In a run-down shopfront in northern Antwerp, the aims of the group were explained by Terryn, a former radio journalist, surrounded by

wall-painted orange, blue and yellow, and adorned with murals and the obligatory poster of Che Guevara.

For 12 months, this has been the home of Weik, a group started by Hermans two years ago and funded by the city of Antwerp in an effort to reach out to young people. The group is described by police as a bunch of political agitators.

Weik's activities include street theatre, jumble sales and Friday-night "vegetarian info kitchen", at which food is followed by political discussion.

But Weik has spawned other groups less popular with the authorities. They include the "bicycle guerrillas", who mass up to 100 cyclists to block crossroads in Antwerp, highlighting their campaign for free public transport.

Terryn sees conflict with the police as a fact of life. Neither girl is present; it is a condition of Van Keer's bail that she has no further contact with the collective.

"The people the authorities target

are either young people, immigrants or people on the streets," says Mr. Terryn. "We try to talk to them and organisations representing them."

But media-friendly Weik is game for more than talking.

When foreign campaigners hit on a publicity stunt involving the "kidnapping" of garden gnomes, and their "release" in the forests, the local media contacted Weik to find out if they knew of anything similar in Belgium.

"When we said, 'No', they asked if we could organise it," says Terryn. "We said, 'Of course we can'."

If gnome stunts posed little threat to the Belgian state, links with the ALF raised more eyebrows. Weik has hosted a discussion involving the ALF, and set up a support group when the girls were arrested.

Terryn insists that this is the sole extent of Weik's involvement with the ALF.

There are, he argues, several reasons why Lyndsey Van Keer may have admitted to the arson attack at Puurs. She may be guilty, or she

may be trying to protect someone else. If so, she may withdraw her confession at a later stage.

This may be informed speculation or a piece of disinformation aimed at his old adversaries in the police. And it has shaken the authorities.

In the wake of the scandal over the bungled police handling of the case of Marc Dutroux, who is awaiting trial over the murder of several children, Belgians have rarely been less willing to trust their politicians or the authorities. Hence the alarm at the growth of direct action campaigns and anxiety about Weik.

As Terryn puts it: "Either the ALF is a well-organised group here, in which case they have not solved the crime. Or the entire police force has been mobilised to arrest two 19-year-old girls."

"That may be more scary for the police, because there are a lot of 19-year-olds, and you can't control all of them."

— *The Independent*

## Hoax raises false hopes for the missing

By Michael Field  
*Agence France Presse*

THE TINY Pacific Republic of Palau is wondering if 22 of its people thought to have died at sea 58 years ago have really turned up alive in Papua New Guinea, or whether they are the victims of an elaborate hoax.

The group left their home state of Peleliu by boat on May 23, 1941 and were never seen again by their fellow islanders. They were given up for dead, a local magazine *Palau Horizon* said in a report on the case last month.

But Palau has been abuzz ever since an Israeli woman, prompted by the report, came on the scene with a story saying that 20 years ago the 22 were alive and well in PNG's Wewak province, where she claims to have spotted them.

Noga Garrison, a resident of New York who describes herself as an art consultant and curator, said that back in October 1976 she had gone to the Mermit Islands, 260 kilometres north-east of Wewak in northern Papua New Guinea, and found the Palauans.

She said she had spoken to the oldest man in the group who told how they had been caught by a storm which drove them far out into the sea, before they were shipwrecked on an unknown island.

Palau's government paid her \$2,500, plus return first class airfares from New York, to fly to the capital Koror to present to President Kuniwo Nakamura evidence that she had seen the group.

Koror is about 1,600 kilometres west of the Philippines capital Manila and the same distance north-west of Wewak. The people of Wewak are Melanesians while people from Palau are Micronesian.

The *Tia Belau* newspaper said the report that the 22 had survived raised high hopes among family and relatives.

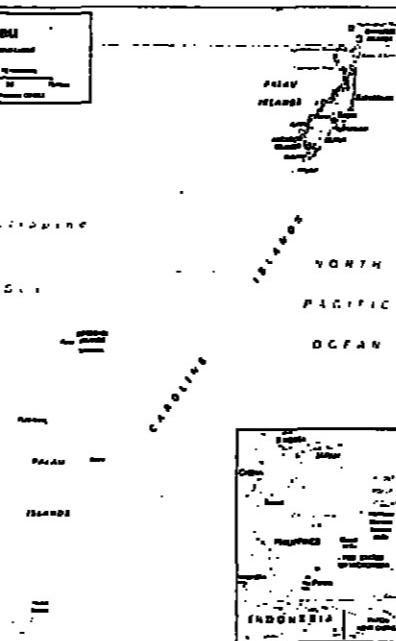
However, *Palau Horizon* noted that if any of the group were still alive, they would mostly be more than 100 years old.

Tia Belau reporter Jerome Temengil said the entire country had talked about nothing else in the days before January 29 when Garrison flew into Palau as a guest of the government and became an "instant sensation".

But high-ranking officials who grilled her during her five-day stay "all shook their heads after a few minutes of meeting her because her information was so scant and flimsy," he said.

In an article he said some questioned "how the entire leadership and public of Palau who have experienced encounters with many foreign con artists, fortune hunters, swindlers and fake investors... can get all excited and spend so much money and effort without checking the reliability of the source of such information."

It said a Palau official, Surangel Whipples, had now flown to Mermit to try



to find the lost people.

When Garrison arrived in Palau last month she and a delegation of seven officials were readied for a trip to PNG on Feb. 3. But she objected, saying she needed time for anti-malarial medicine to work.

"There has been no official report from the government since Noga left," the newspaper reported. "The public is awaiting word from Surangel's trip. But some are asking that if it is true, why none of them or their about 50 descendants ever tried to make contact or to return home during the past 58 years."

If it is a hoax it will be a great trauma, the newspaper said.

"Who will bear the responsibility? At least one person made money and had a first class visit to Palau."

It is difficult not to be seduced by Eritrea, but spend more than a week here and you begin to get the feeling that something is not quite right about the place, that there is something artificial about the country.

"I can't put my finger on it," said one foreign resident. "I like living here but at the back of my mind I just don't understand the place and I never will." It is a strange place," said another. "There is something eerie about it. Everyone says they are happy, but you get the feeling that perhaps deep down they are not, that it is all a facade." The absence of any diversity of opinion, the lack of spontaneity and a zealous adherence to the government's official line suggests a society not allowed the freedom of thought, expression or liberty that its members were promised in their 30-year independence struggle.

A nation forged through struggle, Eritrea was internationally recog-

## Eritreans live with spirit of the revolution

By David Fox  
*Reuters*

TAKING A stroll down Liberation Avenue in the centre of the Eritrean capital is a walk unlike anywhere else in Africa.

You can leave a camera on your car seat with the window open for hours without fear of it being stolen. Shopkeepers invite you in for a cup of the best cappuccino on the continent without once trying to hustle a sale.

And the only beggar to be seen — a young boy who says he wants to be a pilot when he grows up — asks to be bought a text book from a nearby stationery rather than be given money.

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A nation forged through struggle, Eritrea was internationally recog-

nised as independent country only in 1993 after a referendum overwhelmingly backed separation from Ethiopia.

Eritreans resisted both Italian and British colonial rule, but the independence struggle began in earnest in the early 1960s, when Eritrea was made a province of Ethiopia.

With virtually no outside help, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) took on and defeated a succession of Ethiopian armies sent from Addis Ababa to crush them.

The Ethiopians had no shortage of foreign support. First the United States poured millions of dollars in arms and ammunition into the country in an attempt to curry favour with former emperor Haile Selassie.

Then the Soviet Union pumped millions more and backed their aid with military advisors when Haile Mengistu Mariam seized power and installed his marxist military Dergue government.

At various times the EPLF controlled swathes of the country — including cities — and scored punishing raids on Ethiopian garrisons from which it secured the weapons to carry out its struggle.

Addis Ababa countered ruthlessly — not hesitating to bomb towns and cities which were infiltrated by the EPLF even if it meant killing Ethiopian soldiers holed up in their garrisons.

National reconstruction all this time the EPLF went about turning the country into a modern Sparta. Tens of thousands of Eritreans were born, raised, educated and trained to fight

while living in mobile communities that lived off the land.

Their society was a model of industriousness. Engineers, technicians, artisans and academics learnt their trades in the trenches and bunkers which were their homes.

That industriousness is still evident as the country grapples with trying to rebuild a nation which is among the poorest in the world.

Every Eritrean has to do 18 months of national service which includes six months of military training followed by a year spent building roads, dams, schools, hospitals and in other social service. There are few "draft dodgers".

And that same spirit is being exploited to the full as Eritrean troops face off against the Ethiopian army once again in a battle over border territory.

All media in the country is strictly state-controlled and the television and radio station play endless repeats of liberation music that had been almost forgotten in the years of peace since 1993.

The message is victory, but beneath the surface there is unease. Parents wonder if they will ever see their children again. News of casualties — and there certainly have been some — is not made public.

Dead soldiers are buried where they fall, without sentimentality, and those who disobey orders are reported to be ruthlessly dealt with.

"People will have to wait until the end of the war to discover if their friends or families survived," said one former fighter.

## Cold War handshake cosmonaut recounts brushes with death

By Adam Tanner  
*Reuters*

gen would run out. Leonov gradually lowered the pressure in his suit to dangerous levels, and was able to squeeze back into the ship.

"I had to crawl in on my knees, which was very difficult physically. I expended practically my last bit of energy," said the 1.64 metre cosmonaut turned investment banker.

Yet the worst still lay ahead after his return inside.

Spinning a glass ball paper-weight on his desk, Leonov explained that during his space walk the ship did not rotate normally to spread the sun's warmth across the station.

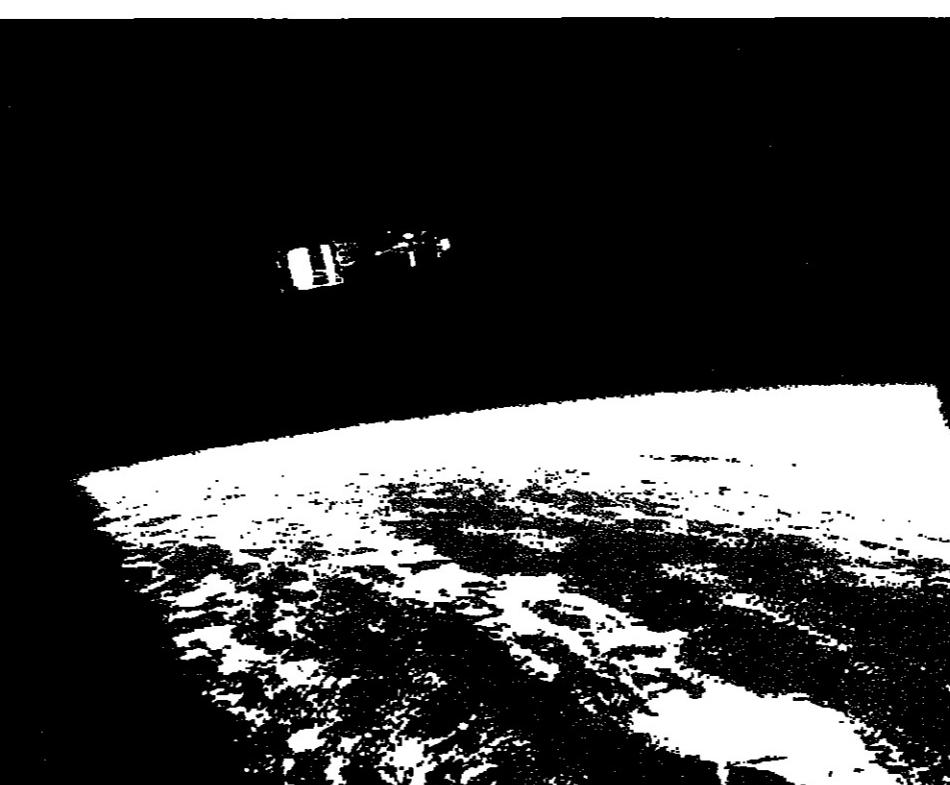
As a result, there was a major failure in the life-support systems and air started leaking from the station. To compensate for the loss, oxygen grew to critical levels.

"If there had been a small spark, the entire ship would have simply exploded like a bomb," Leonov said.

"It was catastrophically dangerous," he said. "I believe that someone above helped us, was watching out for us and decided that it was too soon for us to perish." The two-man crew succeeded in gradually lowering pressure to acceptable levels, but the mission ended with a landing far off course and three days alone in the Ural mountains.

Escaping death Leonov, who was noted for his athletic devotion and winning personality during his years as a cosmonaut, escaped death twice before even leaving the Earth.

He once swam to safety after his car crashed into a frozen pond. On



**Apollo Command and Service Module docked with the Soviet Soyuz spacecraft by means of an androgenous docking adaptor (shown). Leonid and Stafford who shook hands in space across the Cold War divide have since remained firm friends (File photo)**

another occasion he had to bend parts of an aeroplane to escape from a falling jet when an ejector seat failed.

In 1969, pure luck saved him. While he was riding with other cosmonauts in front of a car carrying Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, a young officer started firing off two guns wildly in an assassination attempt.

"I saw how blood started coming out from the driver 50 cm (20 inch-

es) ahead of me, and then I turned my head. The next bullet whizzed by like this, another behind my back. Had I not turned my head it would have hit me," Leonov said.

An investigator later told me "you're a very lucky person," he said. "You should be dead." "God was probably with me. God again." Leonov was due to fly in 1971 on Salyut 1, the first space station put into orbit, but officials changed the entire crew 11 hours before the

flight because of concerns for cosmonaut Valery Kubasov's health.

The new crew set a record of 23 days in orbit, but a leak in the capsule killed the three men as they returned to Earth.

"We can say I stayed alive because of Kubasov's illness," said Leonov, who eventually held the Soviet military rank of major general. "I should say prayers to God." Dramatic missions for all his success in avoiding disaster, Leonov failed to fulfil his dream of becoming the first man on the moon — the honour he would have earned if the manned Soviet moon programme had succeeded. "I often ponder on what we should have done. I find many mistakes of the past leadership.

"Because of bureaucratic stupidity, half the national programme failed," he said, referring to the manned effort to reach the moon.

"We had everything to fly around the moon, but we needed only (space programme leader Sergei) Korolyov," he continued emotionally. "But even with Korolyov we would not have beaten the Americans to be the first on the moon." After the failure of the manned moon effort and the 1971 Salyut disaster, Leonov in 1975 helped boost Soviet pride when he shook hands as an equal with American astronaut Tom Stafford when the Apollo-Soyuz docked together in orbit.

"I understood the immense responsibility," he said, "in the eyes of all of humanity we showed the best side of man."

"No crew to this day has the same

rapport I have with Tom," said. "Our children are friends. Tom named his grandson Alexei. I named a grandchild Karina, the name of Tom Stafford's daughter."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Leonov, the country's most famous cosmonaut since the death of first man in space Yuri Gagarin, quickly adjusted to the new times and became the president of Alfa Kapital, an investment company.

"As experienced as a cosmonaut may be, there comes a time to leave," he said. "But I didn't want to just drink beer or play golf. I'm a different kind of person."

"Both space exploration and business are creative jobs," he said in his office decorated by tiny Soviet and U.S. flags flown to the moon.

"There are no written rules on how to act. You have to think constantly on your feet and solve many problems." rarely arrives in the office before noon — he is an avid artist in his spare time — but when it comes to meeting top officials, he rarely has trouble gaining an audience.

"When I go somewhere to visit an enterprise they do have a different relationship to me," he said. "It's because of the fame

## Jordan, Iraq to renew reduced trade protocol

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordan's Trade and Industry Minister Mohammed Saleh Hourani will travel to Baghdad Wednesday to renew and reduce the Jordan-Iraq trade protocol, ministry officials said Tuesday.

Hourani will head a meeting of the Jordanian-Iraqi Joint Committee with Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammed Mehdi Saleh on Thursday to renew the deal which is expected to total around \$200 million for 1999

against \$255 million in previous years.

Trade and Industry Ministry officials said Amman had lobbied for the reduction of the trade protocol with Baghdad — calculated on the basis of Amman's oil imports — due to the drop in world oil prices.

Jordan, which has no known crude oil reserves, has already agreed to import 4.8 million tonnes of Iraqi crude in 1999 as in past years, around half of which is delivered free

while the rest sells for more than the current market price.

The bilateral trade deal has been exempt from U.N. sanctions on Iraq since the embargo was imposed in the wake of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Jordan relies entirely on Iraq, its main trade partner, for all oil requirements.

The two trade ministers last met in Amman on Saturday for preparatory talks.

## Greenspan sees solid U.S. growth but says economy is under strain

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. economy is under strain, vulnerable to renewed inflation and overseas turbulence, but should still show solid growth this year, Federal Reserve (Fed) Chairman Alan Greenspan said Tuesday.

He also told the Senate Banking Committee that a booming stock market suggested that share prices might be overvalued and subject to a correction.

The Dow Jones industrial average plunged 75 points three minutes after he began his remarks before staging a recovery and returning to positive territory within an hour.

The chairman's long-awaited testimony was a combination of admiration and pride in the resilience of the U.S. expansion tempered with blunt warnings of substantial risks that the Fed must weigh in setting monetary policy.

"After eight years of economic expansion, the economy appears stretched in a number of considerable dimensions, implying upside and downside risks to the economic outlook," he told lawmakers.

While prospects for continued growth and low inflation in 1999 were favourable, he said, the recent increase in consumer spending was indeed a threat to price stability.

He described labour shortages as "a critical upside risk to the inflation outlook" because they will eventually put pressure on employers to raise wages.

The U.S. pool of potential workers aged 16 to 64 now

numbers 10 million, or 5.75 per cent of that group's overall population — the lowest percentage on record.

"Should labour market conditions continue to tighten, there has to be some point at which the rise in nominal wages will start increasingly outpacing gains in labour productivity, and prices inevitably will begin to accelerate," Greenspan said.

On Wall Street, "equity prices are high enough to raise questions about whether shares are overvalued," he told the committee, adding that a downward correction would dampen consumer and capital spending and ultimately economic growth.

In addition, the United States is not immune to foreign economic and financial instability that can be transmitted to U.S. markets quickly and traumatically.

"Weakness in the economies of Washington's key trading partners could further depress demands for U.S. exports, while sagging commodity prices, which have helped restrain U.S. inflation, are unlikely to fall further."

As a result, the Federal Reserve's policymaking Open Market Committee would remain vigilant, prepared to raise or lower interest rates to correct imbalances and distortions that could imperil U.S. prosperity, he said.

But Greenspan's testimony was far from ominous, as he assured lawmakers "the fundamental underpinnings of the recent U.S. economic

performance are strong."

"Our economy's performance should remain solid this year, though likely with a slower pace of economic expansion, and a slightly higher rate of overall inflation than last year," he said.

The Fed foresees growth this year to slow from 3.9 per cent in 1998 to around 2.5 per cent to three per cent, with inflation as measured by the consumer price index edging up from about 1.6 per cent to between 2 and 2.4 per cent.

While labour markets remain "exceptionally tight," Greenspan said, "no evidence of any upturn in inflation has as yet surfaced," a situation he attributed to intense competition for the consumer dollar.

Firms have evidently concluded that if they try to increase prices, their competitors will not follow, and they will lose market share and profits," he said.

Greenspan described conditions abroad as mixed, with South Korea and Thailand showing signs of stabilisation and recovery.

In Russia, where International Monetary Fund assistance has been on hold, the outlook "remains troubling."

In Brazil, he said, authorities "must walk a difficult path of restoring confidence and keeping inflation contained with monetary policy while dealing with serious fiscal imbalances."

But so far, he added, uncertainties hanging over Brazil have not triggered financial instability elsewhere.

## Japan treads fine line on yen fall

TOKYO (R) — Japanese officials, having initiated a fall in the yen, are now attempting the tricky task of nudging it a touch lower without inciting a free-fall.

After publicly endorsing the yen's fall last week, senior officials on Tuesday appeared to signal they want the decline limited and gradual — no mean feat in the currency markets, where a trend can easily become a stampede.

Policy-makers let the currency slide by about eight yen against the dollar over the past week to its lowest level in nearly three months before starting to make noises about how they don't want its decline to accelerate.

The United States has been silent on the yen's fall, encouraging many to believe Washington can tolerate the decline for a certain time to revive the Japanese economy.

But with America's trade deficit ballooning as it becomes the world's buyer of last resort and other Asian nations wary that a yen plunge could reignite regional currency depreciations, Tokyo's ability to indulge a modest yen weakening is being put to the test.

"This is not an environment in which we can explicitly endorse the yen's depreciation," an unnamed government source was quoted by Jiji news agency as saying. "Too rapid a continued decline in the yen or interest rates, just like rapid rises, is undesirable."

The official line, stated last week by top financial diplomat Etsuko Sakakibara, was that a yen decline was "welcome" — to the extent that it was a reaction to the Bank of Japan's (BOJ's) credit easing on Feb. 12.

The dollar, which had been around 114 yen before Sakakibara spoke, climbed briskly last week and jumped above 122 yen — its highest point since Dec. 2 — on Monday after Group of Seven (G-7) officials met but avoided any mention of the yen's fall. Markets took this as a tacit endorsement of a weak yen.

Sakakibara, known as "Mr. Yen" for his prowess in moving currencies, then stopped the yen's fall in its tracks, telling the Nikkei Keizai Shinbun newspaper in an interview published overnight that while the yen's fall thus far had been the result of the BOJ's credit easing, it would resume its rise in the summer if the Japanese economy recovered.

"I really don't know what that range is, but it looks like it is somewhere around...120 to 130," he said.

Yasuhisa Shiozaki, former parliamentary vice finance minister and one-time BOJ bureaucrat, said he thought neither Tokyo nor Washington would be "uneasy" with that dollar/yen range.

## Iraq to activate oil pipeline with Syria soon

BEIRUT (R) — Iraq is planning to reactivate an oil pipeline with Syria in order to raise its oil export capacity, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al Sahaf said Tuesday.

"We are ready to reactivate the Iraqi-Syrian pipeline.

The two countries have agreed on a plan to build a second pipeline that might extend to Lebanon in the near future," Sahaf said.

The pipeline, closed since 1982, transported Iraqi crude from Kirkuk to the Syrian port of Banias. Iraqi officials have said repairs to the pipeline would cost some \$30 million.

Syria and Iraq, ruled by rival factions of the Baath

party, have been at odds since the early 1980s but both agreed about two years ago to reopen their borders and engage in economic cooperation.

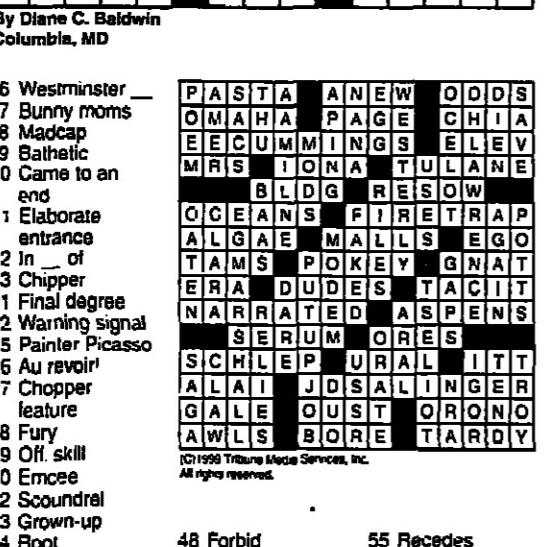
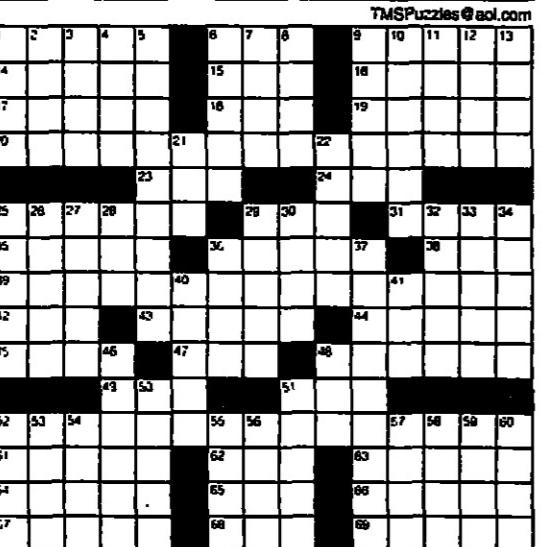
Sahaf held a news conference before heading to Jordan that relations between Iraq, Syria and Lebanon had improved dramatically.

"We are doing our best to double the trade volume," Sahaf said, putting trade with Lebanon at about \$70 million and with Syria at \$140 million.

He said he hoped that diplomatic relations between Iraq and the two neighbouring countries would be restored soon.

### THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams



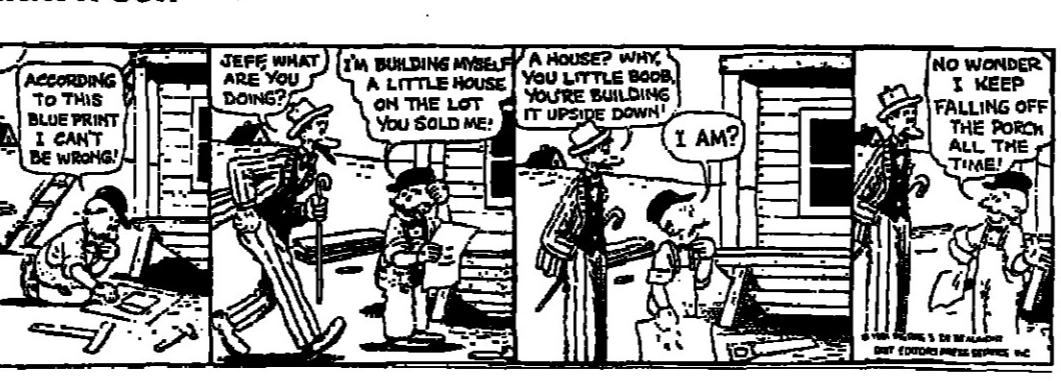
### Peanuts



### Andy Capp



### Mutt'n'Jeff



### THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen



### JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NEKIF

GULAH

THORAU

PLOARE

ON

Jumbles: FELON DECRY BROKER SAILOR

Answer: When Mom returned from a business trip she was — BACK IN THE "FOLD"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's

Jumbles: FELON DECRY BROKER SAILOR

Answer: When Mom returned from a business trip she was — BACK IN THE "FOLD"

(Answers tomorrow)

Answer: When Mom returned from a business trip she was — BACK IN THE "FOLD"

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# Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Wednesday, February 24, 1999 9

## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Cement company reports sharp fall in profit

\*\* DUE TO a 41 per cent drop in exports, the pretax profit of the Jordan Cement Factories Company fell by 22.5 per cent or JD12.6 million last year as it declined from JD11.75 million in 1997 to JD9.1 million in 1998. The lower exports were attributed to the inability to export the full volume of cement agreed with the Palestinian National Authority because of the Israeli barriers that hinder Jordanian-Palestinian trade, and to the halt of exports to Syria which alone used to import around 400,000 tonnes.

The company's director general, Taleb Rifai, said exports to the

Palestinian territories will in 1999 reach 500,000 tonnes which is the ceiling that the company was not able to attain in 1998 due to Israeli impediments. He revealed that exports in 1998 totalled 574,000 tonnes valued at JD11.1 million compared to 976,000 tonnes at JD24.8 million in 1997. Local sales increased by three per cent last year as they rose from 2.25 million tonnes valued at JD79.3 million in 1997 to 2.31 million tonnes valued at JD81.3 million in 1998 (Al Dustour).

### Civil servants may get pay raise

\*\* INFORMED SOURCES have said that it is most likely to raise the salary scale of civil servants and military personnel after the picture of Arab and international financial and economic aid becomes clear. The sources said that former governments have implemented an adjustment programme that resulted in higher prices while keeping wages of employees unchanged over the past years. Noting that employees represent a wide sector of the Jordanian society, the sources said the assistance would enable the government to continue implementing the adjustment programme while providing the possibility to discuss an increase in the pay scale after finding out the size of financial aid to the

Jordanian economy. "The salary increases could be within JD10 to JD20 depending on the scale," the sources said stressing that the financial situation would determine the raises which would not be retroactive.

Munir Sobar, rapporteur of the Lower House's finance and economy committee, said the panel will meet with the minister of finance and the government's economy team tomorrow to discuss raising the pay for civil servants and military personnel and the effect of stopping cash subsidies on the various social groups (Al Aswaq).

### HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) There might be a problem between you and somebody you love today, one of those silly little misunderstandings that gets blown way out of proportion. If you see anything like that brewing today, clam up. It's much better to say nothing than to say something you'll have to take back later.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Your experience comes in very handy today. You might rely on tricks you learned years ago. The old ways will work better than the new ones. One thing's for sure: If it looks like it's going to be easy, don't even go there. It'll be a bigger mess than you can imagine. The best plan for today might be to wait and try again tomorrow.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Looks like you're still arguing your case today. You've got some good points, but if you overlook the emotional angle, you'll be making a big mistake.

The person who's seen as the most sensitive, warm and loving will gain the most approval. Now that you know that's happening, you can put in whatever sentiment is necessary.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 22) Don't ask your boss or your parents or anybody in a position of authority for favours today. And don't try to get off if you get a ticket. The cop is not going to be in the mood to hear your brilliant story.

Nonverbal communication will get through where verbal communication won't. In other words, a tear or a smile are worth a thousand words.

**LEO:** (July 23 to August 22) Proceed with caution again today. Although you and your friends are pretty smart, unexpected complications could arise. It's just one of those days when things seem to be all twisted around topsy-turvy. Keep your overall objective in mind, and don't get tangled up in the details, especially if the boss asks you how its going.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Somebody's going to have to make a decision, and guess what? It might be you! Sure, it's not your place to do that, but you're the only one who can see what really needs to be done. You don't have to use just your own judgement, either. You've got a few friends who can also see what's up. They'll be glad to help.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) You may have voted in favour of love yesterday, only to think that everything is falling apart. Did you make the wrong choice? Not necessarily. Sometimes these things take a little while to work out. If you have a disagreement today, don't make much of it. You just may be starting to understand what's real and what's imaginary.

**SCORPIO:** (October 24 to November 21) There's confusion and misunderstanding, and then a moment of brilliance when suddenly you understand exactly what you should be doing, and with whom. And just about the time that registers, there could be another jolt, and you'll notice you've walked right into a wall. In other words, today is a very mixed bag. Pay attention.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Love's still in the air, but there are complications. It's kind of like you're on a picnic with the person of your dreams, and suddenly a hornet's nest get knocked over and you have to make a run for it. You'll find our more about each other, some of it good and some of it bad. Proceed with caution.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 19) Just when you think you've got it all figured out, you're thrown a curve. It looks like there's a setback, and it might not be your fault. Don't get your feelings hurt if things don't work quite as you planned. Just set your plan a little bit further ahead and give it a try. That shouldn't be hard. It's a Capricorn specialty.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 20 to February 18) You're learning about love, and some lessons have to be learned through experience. You're very intellectual. Heaven knows, you're an amazing scholar. But today, the lesson won't be quite that easy, and it might come as a surprise. Something you had figured one way could turn out to be another, so watch out.

**PISCES:** (February 19 to March 20) You're one of the most generous people in the world, and your only problem is that you don't have enough money to do it all. Don't feel bad. Even if you were a gazillionaire, you wouldn't have enough money to spend on everyone you'd like. So don't even try, especially not today.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx.

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Company	Open Price	Close Price	Change
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Bk. OF JORDAN	1.320	1.340	+ 1.52%
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PHILADELPHIA Bk	0.540	0.530	- 1.85%
<b>BANKS INDEX</b>			
	284.800	POINT =	- 0.21%
<b>INSURANCE</b>			
JO GULF INS	1.850	1.900	+ 2.70%
<b>INSURANCE INDEX</b>			
	125.060	POINT =	+ 0.26%
<b>SERVICES</b>			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.750	1.730	- 1.14%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.820	0.860	+ 4.88%
AL-RA'I	7.050	7.150	+ 1.27%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.900	0.900	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.170	1.170	0.00%
<b>SERVICES INDEX</b>			
	114.820	POINT =	+ 0.03%
<b>INDUSTRY</b>			
CEMENT	3.770	3.800	+ 0.80%
PHOSPHATE	2.380	2.370	- 0.42%
ARAB POTASH	4.130	4.150	+ 0.48%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.710	10.850	+ 1.31%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1.100	1.090	- 0.91%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.120	3.140	+ 0.64%
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## Israeli business ties with Egypt growing—Chamber

TEL AVIV (R) —

Commercial ties between Israel and Egypt have begun expanding in the past year, leading to a spate of joint ventures, the president of the Israeli-Egyptian Chamber of Industry and Trade said Tuesday.

Albert Paposhado said in a statement that about 20 Israeli companies do business in Egypt and estimated they had invested some \$30 million in the last year in joint ventures in textiles, agricultural products, medical equipment, refrigeration and air conditioning and plastics.

Israeli apparel maker Bagir is building a \$6 million factory with an

Egyptian partner to make suits for export to Europe. Bagir said the venture would employ 400 people and was expected to have annual sales of \$23 million.

The chamber said Israeli exports to Egypt reached just \$55 million in 1998, down 3.7 per cent from the year before, while Egyptian exports to Israel plunged 40 per cent to \$18 million.

But Paposhado said the low figures did not reflect the full extent of bilateral commercial ties because most Israeli-Egyptian joint ventures exported to third countries.

He predicted that if the two countries signed an

acc





# Sports

## Ivanisevic earns first round win in London

LONDON (AP) — Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic steamed into the second round of the \$500,000 ATP event at Battersea Park with a 6-3, 0-6, 7-6 (7/1) win over Jan Siemerink of Holland.

Ivanisevic won the first set in just 28 minutes and looked set for a comfortable afternoon.

But the three-times Wimbledon finalist then fell apart in the second set, losing his serve three times as Siemerink took it 6-0 to level the match.

Siemerink had won three of the previous four meetings between the pair and another victory against the seventh seed looked on the cards when he fought back from a break down in the decider to force a tie-break.

But Ivanisevic had by now composed himself again and stormed through the tie-break 7-1 to book a second-round tie against Hicham Arazi of Morocco.

Ivanisevic revealed he found it difficult to concentrate as strong winds buffeted the temporary stadium marquee.

"I kept looking at the roof waiting for it to blow off, I started to freak out a bit in there," said Ivanisevic. "I lost it there for a couple of games and could not get any balls in court, but after one nervous game in the third set I played good tennis."

Sweden's Australian Open finalist

Thomas Enqvist also cruised into the second round with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over Switzerland's Marc Rosset.

Enqvist needed just 57 minutes to brush aside 1992 Olympic champion Rosset, breaking twice in the first set and only requiring one break in the second set as Rosset capitulated tamely, netting a simple backhand on match point.

Enqvist, seeded sixth, needed a late wild card for the event but will now meet Germany's David Prinosil, who continued his fine run of form with a victory over Andrei Pavel.

The 25-year-old took the first set on a tight tie-break before getting control of the match, running out a comfortable winner 7-6 (7/5) 6-3.

World number 46 Hicham Arazi joined Prinosil in the second round with a comfortable straight sets win over Bohdan Ulihrach.

The Moroccan had only won two matches on the tour so far this season but needed just 1hr 10-min to beat his Czech opponent, ranked 30th in the world, 7-5, 6-4.

Former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek of Holland, the fourth seed, made short work of his match, beating American Jeff Tarango 6-4, 6-2 in just 54 minutes.

**Mike Tyson throws a fit in the ring following his bout with Evander Holyfield at the MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas, in this June 28, 1997 photo. Tyson had been taken off antidepressant drugs two days before he became enraged and threw a TV set in a Maryland jail, a source close to the boxer told The Associated Press. Corrections officials in Montgomery County are meeting Monday to assess Tyson's medical care, a law enforcement source told the AP, speaking on condition of anonymity (AP photo)**



**Tyson could lose privileges for jail outburst**

ROCKVILLE, Maryland (AP) — Mike Tyson will learn Wednesday whether he'll lose privileges and time off for good behavior for hurling a TV during an outburst in jail.

The former heavyweight champion faces a closed hearing at Montgomery County (Maryland) correction center that day and a ruling will be announced then, the county's department of corrections said Monday.

Department spokesman Eric Seleznow said jail officials cited Tyson for destruction of property, assault on correctional staff and disorderly conduct.

A disciplinary panel will determine Tyson's level of responsibility. Penalties could include loss of privileges and credit for good behavior in time served.

The 32-year-old boxer has been in an isolation cell since Friday, when he tossed a television set against jail bars in an inmate recreation area. He reportedly became agitated when a guard hung up a telephone he was using.

"Officials have three working days to have a hearing to consider all the facts relevant to the incident," Seleznow said. "At this point, we're not considering criminal charges."

Jail officials Monday assessed Tyson's medical care, said a law enforcement source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Tyson is serving a one-year sentence for assaulting two men after a minor traffic accident in August in suburban Washington. His jail outburst

occurred two days after jail officials began withholding his daily dose of Zoloft, an antidepressant medication prescribed to manage what doctors have described as mood swings, a boxing source who requested anonymity told the Associated Press.

Doctors who testified at Tyson's licensing hearing before the Nevada Athletic Commission in October said he is frequently depressed.

He is being treated by Dr. Richard Goldberg, Chairman of the Psychiatry Department at Georgetown University Medical Center.

The boxing source said Goldberg had unsuccessfully attempted to persuade jail officials to allow Tyson to continue his medication.

A Georgetown spokesman on Friday said Goldberg would not comment on the latest developments.

Zoloft is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of depression, panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Experts say abruptly withholding the medication from a patient would not lead to enhanced mood swings, but it could affect behavior.

"One of the major rules in medicine is don't rock a stable boat," said Dr. John Greist, a clinical psychiatry professor at the Institute of Medicine in Madison, Wisconsin. Greist, who began working with Zoloft three years before its FDA approval in 1991, has prescribed Zoloft for more than 200 patients.

He said that if Zoloft reduced irritability, anger

and aggression, then "discontinuing it gradually or abruptly would permit those inherent characteristics to reemerge."

Before last Wednesday, Tyson had taken Zoloft on a daily basis for four months with the exception of the week preceding his Jan. 16 fight with Francois Botha. A boxing source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he began taking it again the day after the fight.

Tyson won a fifth-round decision against Botha in his first since losing his boxing licence for biting Evander Holyfield during a championship bout in June 1997.

While training for the Botha fight in Phoenix in December, Tyson appeared in good spirits. The week of the fight Tyson was combative at times, using profanity in one exchange with a television reporter.

Tyson is on probation in Indiana for raping a beauty pageant contestant in an Indianapolis hotel room in 1991. He was released from prison in March 1995 after serving three years.

Indiana officials will consider whether to revoke his probation based on his legal problems in Maryland.

He pleaded no contest to the Maryland charges, but has until March 7 to appeal the sentence.

Tyson's advisers hoped he would be assigned to a pre-release programme within 60 days. His assignment to a halfway house would have enabled him to resume his training, but this latest episode in jail could affect his eligibility for that programme.

The women's field has no

## Belmondo wins second gold, Alsgaard beats Myllyla

RAMSAU, Austria (AP) — Olympic Champion Thomas Alsgaard of Norway edged Mika Myllyla of Finland at the finish line to win the men's 15-kilometre freestyle pursuit cross-country race at the Nordic Ski World Championship Tuesday.

Stefania Belmondo of Italy blazed through a snow storm to her second gold medal when she won the women's 10-kilometre freestyle pursuit earlier Tuesday.

Alsgaard, only 15th in Monday's 10-km, the first leg of the pursuit, went into the race with a 57-second deficit behind Myllyla, winner of the gold medals in the 10-km and the 30-km and now owner of three medals from three races.

But Alsgaard steadily cut the deficit and around the 12th kilometre caught up with Myllyla and Bjorn Daehele, who had been switching places in the lead.

As Alsgaard surged ahead, Myllyla stayed with him but Daehele, the Norwegian superstar, dropped behind.

"Once I caught up with Myllyla, my tactic was to stay behind and, rest and sprint in the home stretch," said Alsgaard, a powerful finisher.

The plan worked, just as it did for Alsgaard at the Olympics, when he edged Daehele at the finish line. Myllyla was unable to push ahead as the two sprinted home next to each other.

Daehele, eight-time Olympic champion and the most successful cross-country skier of all time, could not defend the bronze medal and dropped to sixth place.

As Alsgaard won the race in 41 minutes, 35.9 seconds with Myllyla 0.7 seconds behind, Italy's Fulvio Valbusa pushed ahead to clinch the bronze, 22.7 seconds behind Alsgaard. Jari Isometsa of Finland was fourth and Jaak Mae of Estonia fifth.

Alsgaard's total time for two races was one hour, five minutes, 54.9 seconds.

"Before the race, I didn't think it was realistic to think of the gold," Alsgaard said. "I just tried to run at my speed."

Alsgaard clinched his third major title, after winning the 30k gold medal at the 1994 Olympics and the 15k gold in 1998. Myllyla usually loves



Stefania Belmondo of Italy shows the two gold medals she won in the women's 15-km race and the 10-km pursuit cross country at the World Nordic Skiing Championships on Tuesday. Belmondo won Tuesday's pursuit race ahead of Nina Gavriluk of Russia and Irina Tarasenko-Terelia of Ukraine (Reuters photo)



Thomas Alsgaard of Norway raises his arms in heavy snowfall as he crosses the finish line of the men's 15km Pursuit Cross-country at the World Nordic Skiing Championships on Tuesday. Alsgaard won the race ahead of Finland's Mika Myllyla and Fulvio Valbusa of Italy (Reuters photo)

racing in snowstorms, but Tuesday's blizzard was too much even for him. "My opinion is that we should not have raced, I wasn't happy. But it wasn't why I lost,

Thomas was much stronger today and earned his gold medal."

Alsgaard, 27, said the conditions were not fair, "but it wasn't my decision."

Belmondo, who won the opening women's 15k, made her move just after passing the halfway Mark and kept up the pace until she crossed the finish line with an Italian

flag in her hand.

"It was a tough race but I am very happy about the way it turned out," Belmondo said. "Ramsau is like my second family." The Italian trains often in this Austrian cross-country skiing resort.

Nina Gavriluk of Russia took the silver medal 28.9 seconds behind and Irina Tarasenko-Terelia of Ukraine seized the bronze, trailing 34.4 seconds.

Belmondo, 30, is on the best way to wipe out the frustrations of the 1997 championship in Trondheim, Norway, when she had to settle for four silver medals.

Her 15-km victory Friday was her first triumph in a major championship in six years.

Belmondo started the race in eighth place, 44 seconds after Bente Martinsen of Norway, the winner of Monday's 5-km, the first leg of the pursuit.

Russia's Olga Danilova, second in the 5k, held the early lead, but with the race going into the sixth kilometre, Belmondo surged past and held on to win in 29 minutes, 38.9 seconds. Her combined time for the two pursuit races was 42:27.9.

With her quick pace and light weight, the slightly-built Italian flew through the blizzard, easily keeping her distance from the rest of the field.

Behind her, there was a mad scramble in the closing kilometre, with Gavriluk and Tarasenko-Terelia pushing through to win the other medals.

Anfisa Rezsova of Russia finished fourth, while Danilova fell to fifth.

Martinsen, who is not a freestyle specialist, ended up eighth.

Her victory in the 5-km classical Monday was the first gold for the Norwegian women since the 1991 Trude Dybdahl victory at predazzo.

Belmondo was a silver medallist in the 30k at the Nagano Winter Olympics last year.

Belmondo's first major triumph came with the 30k gold at the 1992 Albertville Olympics. A year later, she won two world titles but then had to wait until Friday for another gold.

## New four continents event started Tuesday

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (R) Eighty-eight athletes from 13 countries will compete for \$517,000 in prize money at the inaugural ISU four continents figure skating championships that began on Tuesday.

The new event, open to skaters from North America, Asia, Australia and Africa, is billed as the equivalent to the century-old European championships.

Given that some participating countries such as Mexico, South Africa and Australia are not strong figure skating nations, however, the competition will not have the same depth as the List.

The entry list is also weakened by the absence of leading Americans Michelle Kwan, a two-time world champion, new U.S. men's champion Michael Weiss, and pair team Kyoko Ina and John Zimmerman, who all chose to skip the four continents event.

Carolyne Kruse, chair of the USFSA's International Team selection committee, said "it would have been too much" for Weiss and Ina and Zimmerman to compete here, given that they just came off the national championship a week ago and will fly to St. Petersburg, Russia, next week for the grand prix final.

"It's a scheduling problem," said Kruse. "Our sports medicine committee recommends at least three weeks between competitions."

As for Kwan, Kruse said, "she just wants to train and work towards worlds."

That makes Canada's three-time World Champ Elvis Stojko the headliner here, and the favourite to claim the top prize of \$22,000 in the men's event.

The women's field has no

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